Daily Life

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DAILY LIFE.

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PREFACE.

WE never go from under God's eye. His right over us is always the same; and we are bound, in all we do, to keep His claims in mind. At no time and in no part of our life are we free to forget that God has made us for Himself, that Christ has died to save us from sin, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in us to make our lives and natures holy. In our daily life now we grow into the form, and we gain the strength of character, in which we shall be found at last. We change as the hours pass, though we may not feel the powers at work upon us, or trace the signs of what they do. What we believe, what we love, what we suffer, what we do, all have their part in shaping us. Nothing is trifling, however small it may seem, which bears in any least way upon the great result. Our most passing thoughts and feelings leave their mark. No influence, however weak and indirect, fails to make the good or evil in us stronger. We are what our habits are. We shall be what they become. In the course we take now, we shall go on. The direction in which our wills are set fixes the end which we shall reach. We can choose now to follow, or to wander from, the way of God's will

which leads to good at last. We have a good hope so far as the steady aim of our life is to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," and for "the glory of God." This is to live by faith, in conscious union with our Saviour, drawing in ever new strength from Him to live like Him, and to grow pure as He is pure. This is to please God and to show forth His praise.

Our life is made up of many parts. These are closely intertwined with one another. If one be uncared for, the rest suffer loss, there is a failure in the completeness and harmony of the whole. Our duty is to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. That duty arises from the facts that there is a God, whose we are and with whom we have to do; that we stand in certain relations to our fellow men; and that our Creator has given us into our own care. We cannot fulfil any one of these divisions of our duty, if we neglect the others. Attention to all is needful for the right doing of any one. So, also, any fault in the life, whether from wilfulness, or willing ignorance, has its effect beyond itself. It spoils the life; the will, on this point, stands up and refuses to yield to God's will.

Vagueness ruins the religion of many, and mars that of most. Those who watch their own souls, and the souls of others, know the danger of it. Many believe, or think they do; but they have, and aim at, no clearness of faith. They cannot put in words what it is that they are sure of, and why they hold fast to it as God's truth. Many wish, and try with more or less honesty of

purpose, to do right before God and man. But there is small care to learn the windings of the narrow way in which God calls them to walk, and small watchfulness to lose no time, and to go steadily on, step by step. There is not a right earnestness to learn the claims of each one around. The strength of each new claim, as it arises, is not duly realised and acted on. God is not looked up to for counsel and help, at each turning of life's changeful path. The fact that He is ever waiting to prove Himself indeed a Father is not kept in view, as a fact, to be taken into account with other facts which bear on our well-being. Prayers are apt to become mere formal duties, or utterances of general feelings and desires, rather than real reachings up of thought and love to meet the thought and love of God. And so with Sacraments and other means of grace. Who that has tried does not know how hard it is to keep a clear end in view in the use of every one, and to act upon the certainty that God is always true to His word, and that where we obey in trust, grace surely comes, the strength of which we may at once begin to use.

It is well and needful to place before us, as clearly as we can, all that has to do with our work in this life, and with our hope for ever. Who is God? What is He to us, and what are we to Him? Does He make Himself known; does He draw nigh to us; and if so, in what ways? Does He call us to Him; and if so, how are we to come? What will He have us to do, as the days and hours come and go? What does He do and give to

help and cheer us? If we neglect to face these and like questions, we show that we have still to learn the seriousness of our life.

The papers in this volume were written at different times, without any thought of their ever being published together. The subjects and the treatment of them were suggested in the course of every-day parish work. They deal with the common duties and cares of daily life, and the helps and consolations which God gives. The great truths insisted on are, that God will have us to fear and to trust and to love Him at all times; and that all things are meant to work together for the good of those whom God loves, and enables to love Him.

Whitsuntide, 1885.

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Daily Life.

EVERYTHING OR NOTHING.

IS there a God; or is there no God? Is the Gospel true; or is it untrue? Am I to live after death; or does death end me? If I am to live on after I leave this life, does my state hereafter depend in any way on the sort of life I live now from day to day?

These are grave questions. No one can make them out to be graver than they are. No one can count up the worth to man of the things that these questions deal with. But the world goes on much as if it were small matter whether one answer or the other were the true one. Men give thought and care to all other questions. They either set religion aside as a subject which can wait till more pressing interests have been cared for, or else they give it a half-thoughtful, half-earnest attention in odd minutes of life. It must take its chance with other matters, and be left out when there seems to be no convenient room for it. And the world has got used to this way, and takes for granted that those who pay special heed to religion, and give doctrine and duty a foremost place, do more than is to be looked for, and go beyond what religion has a right to claim. Now it seems as if all sane men must be bound, as sane men, to face the question of religion, and to settle what the right answer is, and to act upon it. Is religion anything, or is it nothing? If it is nothing, then whoever spends any time about it is guilty of mere folly. It should be thrust out of the thoughts altogether, so as not to check the free course of beings who have no hereafter and whose God is self.

Dreams and fancies about a world and a life that are only a dream, must not hinder work in a world and a life that are real and that are all we have. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But, if religion be anything, it can take no second place: it must be the first of all things, and everything else must give way to it. The whole life, the whole man must be guided by the influence of it. This needs no proving: any reasonable being can see and will own that it is simply common sense. "What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself or be cast away?"

Everyone who has a mind, and can think, will feel the claim of religion for earnest, reverent examination. No one should dare to live as if religion laid him under no responsibility, till he has proved that religion is an imposture. The proof must be very clear to make a man sure of that. He is a very bold man who will lightly take as proved that all the wise and learned men of every age who have believed in religion have been mistaken.

GOD.

GOD is. Whether we think of Him or not, whether we think of Him rightly or wrongly, makes no change in God. As the Maker and the Ruler of the world and of us, He has a right to be treated by us with all reverence. When we speak of what He has done, or has made known to us, His might and holiness and love should be kept in mind. We dare not use rash words about Him who is so far above us, and who can do with us what He will. We must not wound that kindness which so wisely and patiently seeks our good.

There is in these days much talk about holy things which could not be at all if God were felt to be a real person, hearing and seeing and caring for what goes on. Many who say and think that their faith is firm speak as if the very

being of God were an open question, to be dealt with as such, or as if God were only a name. Yet, even if there be only a bare possibility that we live in the awful unseen presence of One to whom we owe all and whom we shall see hereafter, there is no excuse for light or heedless words. A thoughtful man will not act or speak as if there were no God, unless he be sure that there is no God, or that God is nothing to him. He will feel that the truth must be learned as far as it can; he will feel that nothing is worth thinking of till this is searched out with all lowly earnestness.

Some men say that they cannot see or hear God, and have no full proof that there is such a being. It may be that they have gone out of the range of God's fatherly rule, and so out of hearing of that voice by which God speaks to the spirits of men. It may be that they seek Him with a proud curiosity, not with hearts that feel need of God. It may be that they have lost, by disuse or by misuse, those spiritual powers by which God is known. It may be that they ask more than can be ours in this life, and so fail in gaining what God does give to true souls here. We are being proved now by the claims on our faith and our life; we show what we are, and we change, by the way we bear our twofold trial. God does not unveil Himself where knowledge would but make sin more daring. He is not One to be laughed or taunted into doing man's bidding. Nor will he heed the bold claims of those who tempt Him to make unbelief impossible. We know God as we know each other, we can hardly, at first, tell how or how much; there comes a new way of knowledge, as our spirits are drawn together and hold communion. He is no God to us of whom we are not sure. We do not fear or love or serve a name or a notion. Our God is a person, who can be pleased or grieved or wronged by what we think and feel and say and do and are. We trust our all to Him as to One who cares for us. We must stand up boldly for Him and for His cause.

KNOWING GOD.

IT is hard to have clear thoughts of God. The more we try to think, the more we must feel how far we come short. This is not strange. We know one another very imperfectly. We are veiled from our nearest friends; and those who trust us most freely cannot open out their whole selves to us. We live apart, and are each a mystery to those who know us best. What we are is learned from what is shown in our words and ways. These are often much misunderstood; so that they hide us instead of helping to give knowledge of us. It is better so. Few of us would like our hearts and minds to be quite bare, even in our homes. Careful to be true though we may be, we would shrink from putting the love of those who love us best to such a hard trial. Only the love of God can bear to know all that God knows. "Our Father pitieth His own children." We are glad that nothing can be kept from Him; for we want Him to make us fit to meet His eye.

So it is not wonderful that we cannot "find out the Almighty." Could we see Him as He is, and look upon Him in some form plain before our eyes, that would not be to know Him. Perhaps we should have less clear thoughts of Him than we can have now. We should be in danger of thinking that what our minds grasped was all that could be known. No man hath seen or can see Him. He dwelleth in light which dazzles men so as to make a thick darkness round Him. No man could look on Him and live: for man is fallen. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God refused for Moses' sake; but He added, "I will make all My goodness to pass before thee." The goodness of God reveals Him whose Name is Love. We learn of God much as we learn of our fellow men. The power and wisdom and truth and tenderness of Him with whom we have to do are plain. We trace the signs of what He is in all of which He is the cause. We "look through Nature up

to Nature's God." We adore Him whose wisdom, shown in all His works, awes us. We seem to be in His very presence as we trace the course of His firm ruling and overruling Providence. Our conscience is like the echo of the voice of One greater than our hearts, who knoweth all things and warns plainly of right and wrong.

But we have more to tell us of God than what He has done and what He does. He has spoken, and He speaks. From time to time, and by degrees, as man was able to bear it, He has drawn near to men's hearts and minds, and has let them know what was in His mind and heart. At last He has spoken by His Son. Christ came, declaring Him whom no man hath seen at any time. The Word of God, He revealed God. He was on earth God manifest in the flesh. When men saw and heard Him, they looked on God and listened to the Divine voice.

We have the written word which tells of Him. We can learn of God in the life and teaching of the God-man. When we try to think of God, we put Christ before our minds, and we are sure that our thoughts, as far as they go, are true. But there is more than this. Christ is not a mere memory of the past: He lives now: He comes and He calls us to come to Him. He abides with and in His people. By His Spirit He makes Himself known to those who long for the knowledge of God. He is the Way, by whom we can draw ever nearer. He is the Truth, revealing God's mind and His will. He is the Life, making us one with God. Beholding as in a mirror the glory of God, we are changed into the likeness of what we contemplate, as one part of the Divine glory after another takes human form in us. As we set ourselves to do God's will we grow sure of His doctrine. As we are purified in our natures we know Him.

We can know God only as He wills to make Himself known, withdrawing the veil which hides Him. So far as we are led by the Spirit of God, we have ears to hear our Father's voice, minds and hearts to recognise Him. The pure in heart, who without guile seek to know what is true that they may do what is right, are enabled to see God now

by faith. Their faith receives grace and truth that give them power and fitness to know Him as a real God. When in the life of faith they have grown towards what grace and truth are meant to make them, they see Him face to face, as He is seen by the sinless and glorified.

We cannot tell in what way or form God will show Himself hereafter. Some will, doubtless, be nearer than others, and have a fuller vision of His glory. Enough for us to be sure that what is well is given now. God hides Himself from some, and veils Himself more or less from all. He who knows what we are, and what we can bear, will reveal what is best to help our joy and growth for ever.

THE FATHER AND HIS CHILDREN.

"The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."—*Zechariah* viii. 5.

GOD is our Father. This is the name by which He calls Himself, and by which He would have us think of Him. The best earthly father is good and fatherlike, only so far as he is like the Father of us all. Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful. He knows what we are; He makes kindly allowance for our weakness and childishness. He is so great that He can feel with us in our little cares and needs. Our lightest pains and fears are taken note of by His large, loving sympathy. Our simplest pleasures are pleasant to Him, for they brighten the way of those whom He loves. The most trifling gift we offer, or work we do, for Him, is welcomed as a sign of our love.

God is not a Father in whose presence His children must feel constraint, whom they must forget before they can feel glad. There are earthly fathers, the sound of whose voice or step is the signal for free happiness to end; the little ones move and speak before them with a dread of making

some mistake and bringing down anger or punishment. The timid look and the nervous voice tell of a hard ruler, and are the sorest reproach to the man who thus loses his hold for good upon his children, and destroys the meaning and the power of the name "Father" as a name of God. The Father on high would have his children love to have Him near; He would have them be at rest and happy in His presence. He would add to their joy, not damp or still it. He knows when there is a true, simple love for Him and wish to please Him; and He wants His children to trust Him, and to be sure that He loves them and is glad to see them happy.

It is wrong to think that God only cares to see us pray, and worship, and do our daily tasks and what men call religious work. Our amusements are as needful as our food and rest, to keep mind and body and spirit in health and vigour. God has so made us: He is interested in us and in all we do and enjoy, all the hours of our life. The boys and girls at their play, and the men and women at their more quiet pleasures, are under the eye of a Father, whose loving tenderness looks kindly on them always. He is the awful God: yet, to those who love Him, His might is shown in the power of His love. There is nothing to dread in His nearness. Nothing need be feared but sin, which would separate us from Him.

GOD'S LOVE.

A SICK child lay moaning in his mother's arms. Hardly seven years old, he had the look of an aged dwarf. Every feature was misshapen, every limb was deformed. He was hardly like a human being; and the eye turned from him with pain and shrinking. He gave no sign of intelligence, except by clinging in a sad helpless way to his mother. The case was one for which words of comfort were hard to find. I said what I could. When I spoke

of the blessing it would be to the poor sufferer to be called from the lot before him on earth to a new life with new powers, the mother replied, "I know it, and I often pray that God may take him; but I think it would break my heart to lose him; you see he has been all my care since he was born, and he seems to know and turn to me." As she said this, she folded her arms more closely round the child. It was a wonderful instance of what a mother's love can do. That which made others shrink shuddering from the child, bound its mother more tenderly to it. She loved it more, because no one else loved it; and because, in its misery, it seemed to know and trust her.

So God proved that He did not forget this poor little one. For it was His own divine love that inspired that woman's heart. She had, even in her sorrow, a joy in forgetting self for her child's sake. But there was a deeper blessedness in being enabled by her God for the work He gave her, and in showing tenderness to one whom God owned as His.

So God helped me to wonder less at His love and patience with His children. It seemed less strange that all our unloveliness fails to turn His kindness from us. How much there is in us which disgusts even ourselves! How deformed our spiritual nature is! How lost or marred in us is the glory in which God first made man! It would be hard for any human love to outlive the full knowledge of all we are. And how little meaning God's words have to our dull inattentive minds! How unmoved we are by His gentlest care, and by all that has been borne for us! How almost unconscious we are that He bears us in His arms at all! Yet His loving-kindness and mercy do not fail, His patience does not tire. Like the mother, to whom He gave such a strange might of love, He would not lose us, and He clings to us more because of all the sacrifice we have cost. He welcomes the feeblest sign of faith, and of the drawing of our hearts towards Him. But, unlike her, He has the power to relieve us of what stirs His pity. If we will, our Father will make us not objects of compassion but of delight. He will enable us to know His love, and find our full joy in it. He will take away

all that spoils the glory of our nature, and hinders its activity. He will make us by His grace fit for the high employments of the perfect.

FAITH IN GOD.

GOD always says what He means, and means what He says. He can do what He wills, in His own way and time. He is true, and does not lead astray those whom He asks to trust Him. We believe, or say we believe this. And we also speak of the Bible as the book which God has caused to be written to teach us His truth and His will. We profess to turn to it when we want to know of God, and of what He wants us to believe, and do, and be. Yet among those who talk most of faith in God, and love for the Bible, how little real, downright, honest, living faith and love there seems to be. Men very often believe first in themselves, and believe in God so far as He agrees with them. They obey His laws as far as they like them. They trust His promises as far as He gives them a feeling in themselves that they are to be trusted in. Thus there is a wilful picking and choosing out of the Bible—very little right faith and obedience. The real question with men is not, What does God say? but, What seems to suit my fancy? So each man's rule of faith and duty is formed very much according to the sort of man he is. And he is very apt not to take that which is best for him, but what is worst.

One man is of a very hopeful disposition. He looks on the bright side of all things. He can hardly be made to feel the seriousness of his daily life, and he takes eternity for granted. He dwells on God's promises. He puts out of sight the conditions to which they are bound. He rejoices in hope of the crown, but never thinks of the cross and the warfare. The warnings against sin and sloth may be for others. He never dreams that they have any meaning for

him. But, as God's laws have promises in them, so God's promises have laws in them. What God has joined, man may not part.

Another is filled with a sense of his own sin, and God's glorious holiness. He cannot bring himself to believe that for one so unworthy those great words of love are true. He longs to be as others are who enjoy their cheer and strength; but he stands afar off in lonely doubt, hating himself, not daring to love God. Fear casteth out love. This is a sore wrong against God and himself. God is love, and to sinners He has revealed Himself by that name. Knowing all that sinners would be, He sent His own Son to die for them. His love is boundless, and so is His power to save. His word of promise is as true as are His words of warning. The weakest longing for His grace is the first gift of grace, and assurance of all love. Man must not wait for an angel to come to tell him that God's love is real. He must take it for granted, and act upon it, putting away each doubt as sin. Feeling about God's love does not make it be or not be. Faith receives its power, though it may in many different degrees gain the consolation of it.

Again, many believe God's words that are plain, but think those are not true which need faith to receive them. Thus they doubt the grace of Sacraments, and even neglect them altogether, because they have only God's word as to their meaning and value. They think, that when God speaks of mysteries, He must mean something else that is not a mystery. Because they cannot see how a thing is done, they will not believe it is done at all. They act just like a patient, who would refuse all medicines, the action of which the physician did not make quite clear to him.

Now all this is great sin and great folly. God is God, and we are to be saved, if we are saved at all, in His way, not ours. The Bible is a large book, and there is a great deal more in it than most people give any heed to, or really believe to be of use, or even true. We are no judges of what truths and laws of God are more or less important. The Bible is not for us to judge. We shall be judged by it.

Those who are earnest in shunning evil and doing good,

must be so, trusting in the sure promises which tell of grace and of salvation, and holding fast in faith to Christ. Those who have joy and peace in believing must be careful to "maintain good works," thus giving proof that Christ indeed lives in them. Those who devoutly and thankfully use the Sacraments and means of grace Christ gives, must do so as a sign of faith in the unseen Saviour who works in hidden ways, and as a means of gaining power from God to serve God more faithfully.

FAITH.

FAITH is a very easy thing to talk about: it is a very hard thing to have. Few seem to have it at all; and those who have most of it feel with deepest shame how weak their faith is. If a man does not know what faith is, or what it ought to do for him and in him, he can soon think he has all he need have. When he begins to realise how vast the new world is which faith opens out to the soul, and how priceless are the joys which only faith can grasp, he gets more hard to satisfy.

Faith is that by which a man receives the truth and grace of God, so that they are his own possession, doing him good, making him wise and strong and glad. It is as the eye, without which light is vain. It is as the hand which takes and uses what is needful for life and safety, which God provides.

How dimly, and how short a way, most men see into the world of things beyond the reach of the eye of flesh! How few have faith clear and strong enough to be able to live in the world of things unseen, and feel them as real a power upon their lives as those things which their senses know of! How few take into account God and eternity, and the facts of man's state which the Bible tells of, and, as a matter of course, rule their thoughts and words and acts accordingly! Some think they have great faith because the truths of God seem plain to them, or because they can, with an effort,

turn now and then from the world in which they live, to a strange and far-off one. He who has a strong, true faith breathes the air and gains the spirit of a high, pure world, and lives in the midst of what to the unbelieving has no existence. The truths of the Gospel are facts which claim to guide all hearts and lives.

How few prize and rightly profit by the grace which God brings near to souls in so great variety of ways! How few feel the real worth and necessity of that by which spiritual life and strength are built up, as they feel the need of food and air for their bodily nourishment! How few show their earnestness in forcing their way through difficulties, and in making sure of a regular and full supply! Some think they have great faith, if they take God at His word at all, and trust, in any half-doubting way, to the help given in God's appointed means of grace. He who has a strong, true faith knows that the unseen God bestows, in ways of His own choosing, His manifold gifts of grace. He is sure of God's word, and he does not stop to question how God works. He knows that he needs all gifts of grace: so he never thinks of neglecting or only half using any of all the means and helps appointed in God's wise love.

IS IT REAL?

WE say we believe in God. We are sure that we do. If we are asked, we are ready to declare that He is Maker and Ruler of all things, that He knows our hearts, and will one day call us to judgment. We speak of what He has done to show His love, and win ours—to take away our sin, and give us holiness. Are we in earnest? Do we only think we believe all this, or have we indeed a firm hold on truths which have a firm hold on us? It is quite easy to be mistaken, and those are most likely to be wrong who take for granted that all

is well. We judge others by what they say and do; why not use the same test in our own case? It is better to know how things are, even if the knowledge is startling. Dreams may be pleasant, but where there is work to do, and foes are watchful, it is better to be awake and working.

What kind of life ought to follow from our faith? Do we look like people to whom the great truths which we say we believe are real? Do we seem to ourselves in any true way under the power of them?

We say that God knows our thoughts and traces the course of our whole inner and outward life. What mean those low shameful feelings that we let dwell in our minds? What mean those bad things that we linger over when alone, which we would not put in words and let our best friends know of? Do we believe indeed that the eye of God reads everything that passes, and do we care nothing for what He thinks of us; or is God unreal to us?

We say that Christ died to save us from sin, and that each new sin of ours is a slight to His love, a new wrong against Him. How is it that we sin with so light a heart? Is the story of the Cross no more to us than a touching tale? Is Christ no living person to our faith, or are we the cold, unfeeling tramplers on His blood we seem?

We talk of a nearness of God which is promised and which we invite when we pray. How often do we speak when we kneel, as if the Lord of worlds, the Father of our souls, were come to meet us? Would our thoughts and eyes roam, would our words go on unsent by mind or heart, as they are wont, did we see heaven open before us, or did such a light shine as shone in the Temple, to tell how close God comes?

We are ready to be angry with those who doubt that in the Blessed Sacrament Christ bids us to the holiest nearness we may have on earth. We say we hold those words of Jesus most true, that in some heavenly way He gives His Body and His Blood, and that so we are made one with Him and He with us. This is a truth so high that none can feel or act worthily about it. But do we try to be anything like

what we ought in preparing to come nigh, or in our life after it? How far is our aim towards the height? Do we feel and mourn how sadly we fall short?

We call ourselves the temple of the Holy Ghost, and take for granted that we are. Put this truth into plain words, and think what it means. If we hold it, how awful is the daring with which we ask vile spirits of evil to come in and dwell side by side with God! How mad the carelessness with which we treat our Divine Guest! What an insult to Him is the coldness with which we cherish His Presence!

So on in other ways. It is not hard to know how things are, if we only take the trouble. We are slow to take trouble in what has to do with our souls' good, and with God, because our faith is weak, and the things of this world press. The weakness of our faith makes our lives what they are—weak and unsteady, not like the lives of those who have a God and an Eternity. If we would have our lives firm and right, we must have our faith firm and right. Faith grows by exercise. The things unseen become more clear as we look away from things seen to dwell in thought on what is made known to faith, and as we work and pray. God gives light to those who seek it. There is a power in the great truths of the Gospel to guide, to cheer, to strengthen, to purify. This power waits to bless those whose minds attend, whose hearts grasp, and whose wills yield.

ONE ONLY.

CHRIST once said to the Jews, "Ye shall seek Me and shall die in your sins." These words sound startling. Did not Christ come to seek and save? What did He mean when He said that some should try to find Him and yet not find Him? Did He not come to die that man might live? What meant He when He said that some should seek Him and yet die? Did He not come to take

away sin? How were some to go on seeking Him, and yet perish in their sins?

The Jews sought for Christ: their one hope and longing was for His coming. But they sought for a Christ after their own heart, who would give them their own way. They wanted a Christ to lead them, not against their spiritual, but their earthly foes. They wanted one to free their land and their nation, and make them glorious as in the days of David. They would not have a Christ who spoke to them of sin, who set an example of meekness, who said He was to die, who only promised them a spiritual kingdom. So they put away the only Christ there was; they were left vainly seeking for one who never came; they were unsaved. With the Life and the Saviour among them they died in their sins.

And now men do as they did then. Men feel the want of Christ; they seek for Christ, but it is for a Christ after their own hearts. They will not have the Christ of whom God speaks, and who comes to them, and calls, and waits to be gracious.

Some seek a Christ who will ask them to bear no cross, to deny no wish of a proud or a pleasure-loving heart. They want one who will lead them by an easy path, and give them honour among men. There is no such Christ. There is only One who says, "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." They shrink from Him, and so they are Christless.

Some seek for a Christ who will make no claim on faith, who will not ask them to bow their proud thoughts, and to trust that he knows the truth of what he tells them, though it be hard for them to prove. They seek one who will explain all he does, and the reason and meaning, the how and the why of all he bids them do. They seek one who will not make them feel that he is wiser than they, and has a right to their trust. There is no such Christ. There is only One who asks to be trusted in the spirit of a little child.

Some seek a Christ who will be content that men

should learn and know about him and his truth, and study his word, and be able to overthrow false doctrine. There is no such Christ. The only One says, not "If ye know these things happy are ye," but, "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them."

Some seek a Christ who will be content with warm feelings and glowing words, but cares not for holiness of life. There is no such Christ. The only One says, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

Some seek a Christ who will look for the mere outward doing of duty, and going through the form of worship; but who will not ask about the spirit and the motive. There is no such Christ. The only One looks on the heart, and cares not alone for what a man says and does, but for what he is, and why he speaks and acts. He is not pleased by flattery. He does not want lip honour, or the work which a man goes through like a dead machine.

If we feel our want of Christ, it is worth while to be sure that we seek Him. We cannot make a Saviour after our own fancy or liking. It would be bad for us if we could. Our wise way is to learn of the Christ whom God has made known in His word, and take care that we find and cleave fast to Him. He is the only Saviour. A false Christ cannot help us. Without the true Christ we must die in our sins.

TRUST IN THE LORD.

"I TRUST in the Lord." These are the words that everyone is ready to say. Some will add, "There is no one else to trust in," as if they only fell back on God's goodness because they could find no other, or because all other helps but His has failed. The trust that many

people have in God is sin. It does not honour God, it insults Him. It does not show faith, but unbelief.

What do they trust in Him for? What do they try to do in the strength He has to give? They think that in some way He helps them on in life, and makes them able to pull through their trials, and hold up under their hardships. And they look forward to finding Him ready to take care of them in the hour of death, and to make them safe in a better world. This is all. There is no thought of leaning on Him in a fight with sin; there is no thought of taking Him at His word, when He warns of danger and points to the true way of help for souls. Their trust is not that of a child in its Father, or of a creature in Him who made and owns him. It is the trust of a master in a servant. They treat God as One who need be treated with no respect, but may be kept waiting outside their door to be called in when they want Him, and set to do what work they choose.

Why do they trust Him? What do they know about Him? What do they try to know? Can they give their ground for believing that the help of God is at hand? What right have they to think that they have any claim on His care, and shall not in time of need be left alone? True, God takes care of the least of all that He has made. The birds and flowers are watched over, and all that any of us has of what is good is from His hand. But we are not like the birds or flowers. We can sin; we can go away from God; we can, as it were, build up a great wall of sin or unbelief between Him and us! We can choose Him, or put Him from us. God makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good: but He tells us plainly that the wicked shut themselves off from His mercy and turn His goodness into wrath. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil."

They who trust in God for help to be holy may trust in Him for all else. He never faileth them who thus draw nigh to Him. The "righteous are never forsaken." They

who seek from Him *first* His kingdom and righteousness, shall lack no manner of good that heaven has to give. And being made good themselves, they need fear no evil in the day of death. God will bring them safely to the home for which they have looked to Him to make them ready. They can always pray to One close by them, and known and tried as a friend. He whom they follow will not leave them without ever new cause to trust Him, even to the end.

But men have no right to trust God for the good things of this world, if they show no care for the good things of a higher world. They have no right to trust Him for health or happiness, if they do not trust Him as the giver of holiness. They may not dare to trust Him as their portion for ever, if they do not make Him their strength in a life lived in His love, and faith, and fear.

Those who do evil may trust God. But how? as one who keeps His word and is as true when He speaks threats as when He calls by loving promises. What He says He is *against* the evil, is as true as what He says He is *for* the good. What He tells us will happen to those who live in sin is as sure as what He tells us will happen to His holy ones. Let none dare to doubt Him. None shall find that His plain words fail to come true. We can count on them every one. Evil and good may trust in God. He always says what He means, and does it.

The one thing to ask about is, not whether we can trust God, but whether He can trust us. Are we true, faithful, earnest, honest, trying to do good and be good, in His strength? Do we show our trust in Christ by doing what He tells us, and using what He says will do us good? Do we go where He leads, listening for His voice, copying His life, trying to be like Him? If this be so, then all must and shall be well. Come sorrow, sickness, loss, death—we can say, "I know in whom I have believed; there shall no harm happen to me."

JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING.

TO believe is one thing: to have "joy and peace in believing" is another. The gift of faith is offered to all. God does not make all in this world know the full happiness which faith can give. All may believe, if in a lowly spirit they will seek for faith. We are sure of this; for God does not offer a Saviour, and refuse power to lay hold on His salvation. The faith of many is tried sorely, because God sees it good for them to keep them thus tried.

The want of joy and peace are no proof of want of faith. Sometimes men are pressed down by a bodily weakness, which makes it hard for them to see light. Sometimes they are naturally of a sad, anxious disposition, easily made downhearted. These, from their great distrust of themselves, are often tempted to lose trust in God. Often they think they doubt God, when indeed they are only weighed down by their own weakness, and hold fast to Him all the while, with a true heart. People who suffer from some sicknesses have to make large allowance for the sure effect that these always have on the hope and courage.

Again, there are many people to whom God denies great and clear signs of His favour, because He knows they could not safely have them. He keeps them low, that they may be lowly, lest self-trust should lead them to sore risks, and put their souls in danger. He shows them their wants more than their gains, lest they should feel that enough was done, and grow weak in effort and unwatchful in their warfare.

Again, some need to be kept without much joy, lest they should forget the long years which they have spent in sin, and the mercy that bore with them and called them to holiness. Men are apt, when God has forgiven them, to forgive themselves, and to feel as if they had done no wrong. They need to be warned how deeply they have

let the roots of evil strike. They need to feel how far they have wandered out of the right course. They need to be reminded that they have no right to look for the joy and free-heartedness of those who have never gone astray. They have been prodigals. They have risen to go to their Father; He comes to meet them; He cheers and welcomes them: but the music and dancing are not to be till they reach home. Enough for them to know that their Father receives them, and leads them homewards. They must not wonder or complain if the way be hard and weary. Their Father is with them; in good time they shall see the lights of home, and be at rest, and glad, with all shameful signs of the bitter past gone.

God often keeps men weary and heavy laden that they may be sure to "come" all the way He wants, and so may be sure of true rest. Our faith may be tried; let us not complain, but see that it grow stronger by the trial. If a cloud come between us and God, let us ask "Why?" If it be sin past that throws its shadow still over us, let us be humble and not complain. If it be sin now, let us take care to put it away. God changes not. Beyond the cloud He is our Father, and His name is Love. Let us "trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." He loves us more than we can love ourselves. Every true desire for holiness is from Him. He will give us that now, more and more if we will have it. This is enough. He will give us all the joy that is good for us. We can wait, knowing that joy will be for eternity, if we make holiness our aim now.

NONE OTHER NAME.

AMID all the dark earthliness and irreligion of this land, there is one thing which seems to have hope in it; that is, the almost universal feeling that Christ is a Saviour to be trusted. The feeling may be hidden and

disowned; but there it is in most men. Lay the godless and worldly, even the openly profane, on a sick bed; put him face to face with trouble or death; take him away from those things which hide truth from his soul; still the noise of the world around him; there is One to whom he almost always turns. There is one Name which his lips will be ready to breathe. Words about Christ he will hear with eagerness, or at least with no question of their reality. Christ has a hold on men which they often little know of. There would come a chill over the hearts of multitudes of the most ungodly, were they told that there was no hope in Christ. Many a heart would ask in fear, "To whom shall we go in our time of helplessness, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment?"

But this faith, after all, what does it do? In many it but helps to quiet the uneasy heart, and give a hope which shall perish. In many it cheers on in sin, and only keeps back from the way in which Christ calls them. The meaning and power and aim of the Saviour's work are forgotten. He is kept in reserve, as it were, like a life-boat, only to be used when the ship is going down. Alas, the ship often strikes when souls are sleeping: it is too late! They are not ready; after a fearful effort, or else before they have had time to rouse themselves, they sink, as if no means of escape had ever been provided.

The work of Him who died, and rose again, and ascended, was not, in the first place, to fill heaven with pardoned sinners. It was to fill this world with new-born men, who might show in them the power of the life of the Crucified, and who might enter on the heavenly state, prepared for it by a daily growth in holiness. Christ did not die to make sin safe, and a life of loving faith needless. It was not His plan to leave men to form hard habits of sin, through years, and to fit them for heaven by a swift miracle, or by slow discipline in an after state. It was His plan to give him will and power to beat down the evil in him, and put away the evil around him, and grow, day by day, ready to take his place among the just. Christ died and lives, that earth may become like heaven; that

men even now may learn and know much of the blessedness of freedom from sin and its curse. It was no part of His plan to make men free to become devils and turn earth into hell, and to have before them, all the while, a hope of heaven. True it is that His Hand is not shortened that it cannot save the worst, even at the last. He can call the dead soul to new life, with His word. He can raise one out of whom the spiritual life has only just departed. He can awaken him who is being carried out as it were to be left to hopeless decay. He can take him from the hands in which he seems to lie helplessly, and give him eternal life. And He is still able to save when the soul has lain long in corruption, and the hope of those even who love him most on earth has gone. He can work miracles, and He does. He renews what has been lost and worn away. He wins hearts which the world and sin have hardened. He changes, as it were, the very substance of the soul by His almighty grace. But this is not the rule. The rule is that as men live so they go on when they die; that he who has sown thorns all his life cannot hope to gather wheat when the reapers come. The rule is that each day of obedience to grace leaves its mark on the nature, which lasts; and that each day of rebellion, nay, each act of rebellion against grace hardens, and makes stiff in evil.

Christ His own self bare our sins, that we being dead to sins might live unto righteousness. When did He mean us to become dead to sin? Is it in the world to come? Is it after sin has been followed to weariness, and all relish for it has been lost? Is it in the lonely hours of sickness, when it is too late to undo the evil of a godless example? No; Christ bare our sins that, even now, we might live by the faith of the Son of God. He meant us now to cease from sin, as if all in us on which evil lays hold and which clings to evil were dead. He meant us, in newness of life, to show the power of the living Christ as our Righteousness.

OPINION.

"I HAVE a right to my own opinion." So a man said at the end of a long talk about a future life. He held that men come and go "like mites on a cheese, and that when they are dead they are done with." He did not care to hear what was said on the other side, and he had no proof to give for his view. He only stated it over and over again, as if the truth of it was quite plain, and the question not worth arguing. He added, with a civil contented smile, "I have a right to my own opinion."

Had he this right? Some would say, of course he had, everyone has, this is a free land, and we may hold what we like. In one way this is true, but in another way it is very misleading. A man who acts on his own unhelped judgment in a serious question which he has not studied, is simply thought foolish, and is both laughed at and blamed. He may think himself more knowing in law than his lawyer, or more skilful in treating sickness than his doctor; but if he acts on his opinion in grave matters he will soon find out his mistake. He may hold the opinion that the earth is flat, or that the sun goes round the world; but if he talks boldly about things he has never looked into, people tell him to read and think, or else take the word of those who have done so. And in lesser things of this world the same is true. A bootmaker who has never been in the country does not think of saying that he knows all about growing crops or feeding cattle.

This man, who was quite sure that he had no after life to fear or hope about, had never given close thought to the question. He worked at his trade all the while when he was not drinking. He never read anything but his Sunday newspaper. He only spoke with those who were like himself. He did not come in the way of God and religion. All he heard was on one side. He was living a life all for

the world, and he cared for nothing above it. He had no right to his opinion. He had done nothing to form an opinion about so awful a subject. In fact he had no opinion that could with any truth be called by the name.

It is very strange that the most solemn matters, in which we have the deepest interest, are those in which men show least care and earnestness and doubt of self. Health and prosperity are felt to be worth too much to be trifled with, and even those who know a good deal about law or medicine try to be helped by the best opinion in a serious case? In religion many seem to think there is not any difficulty. Questions that have to do with eternity are settled off hand, as if no one could go wrong, and it were small matter if he did. The awfulness of what is at stake is not felt. Man's ignorance and weakness are forgotten. So it is that people form notions with no good ground for them, and act on private fancies or hopes and wishes, which they take for granted are truths. One man does not like some rule of the Church. It is his opinion that it is not right or needful; so he sets it at naught. Another does not see the use of Sacraments. It is his opinion that they are only forms. Another man sees no good in public worship. It is his opinion that he is better employed taking a walk or resting at home. So there is not one truth of the Bible or means of grace that the opinion of some people does not get rid of and set aside as useless or absurd.

Of all questions, the most great and dreadful are those about religion—about eternity—about God. If we are to live for ever and give an account to God who owns us, then no man who is not mad can doubt the seriousness of our life. Before we act as if our death were the end of us, we are bound to make quite sure of it. We must see that our "opinion" is formed after the most lowly earnest care. And if we believe God's word about eternity, nothing that has to do with it in the least way is a trifle. What claims to come as a message from God must be treated with reverence till it be proved false. We must not be guided by our opinion as to what God is likely to

have said or commanded. Our part is to find out with all care what His word and His will are, and then to believe and to obey.

LOST.

WE never know the value of a thing till we have lost it. So we hear every day. So most of us know well. What we trifle with and take small care of while we have it, often looks of priceless worth when gone. A thing that has been, and is no more, and never shall be again, how we often long for it! How much would we often give to get it back! Health is thrown away by the strong young man;—he who must go on to his grave with a sick, worn-out body, knows how good a thing has been wasted. Money is spent in sin;—the poor man, starving or in want through his own doing, feels the loss of what he has put into other hands. Friends are loved little or treated coldly;—their warm hearts and kindly looks and words are missed when they have gladdened earth for the last time.

So with the things of heaven, the grace of God, the life of souls, the treasure of God's heirs. Men think all else of more worth now, or feel small care to guard well their right in them. How little men will do or give up rather than run any risk of losing them! How faint the joy in them they show! None shall know the value of these things indeed till they are lost, till the time for gaining sure hold of them is passed for ever. The saved in heaven shall be filled with bliss, but even they shall not know as the lost shall the worth of their joy. What must it be to look at heaven, to be out of it, and to know that the door is shut and will never open to let us in! What must it be to look across the great gulf, and see the rest and glory, and catch the music of the songs, while we are in darkness with only wailing round us! What must it

be to miss the grace that held us up and kept us from doing all evil, and to feel that we are going down ever faster into the pit of evil which has no bottom! What must it be to think of endless life and joy and wealth without bounds, and to be bare of all, dead in soul and hopeless! Oh, what price would then be put on those means of grace, those calls of love, those words of warning! If these might be had once more, what could tempt to part with them!

SIN AND FOLLY.

WHEN men are asked to risk the loss of some earthly good, they want to know why. Any reason seems enough to lead them to forsake or neglect religion. Satan finds them ready dupes, and they take him at his word, no matter how mournfully absurd he asks them to make themselves. Some men he persuades to give up religion altogether; some he is content to rob of those parts of religion which they need most to help and comfort them. He leaves some in hard ungodliness, and others with a form which is only a trouble and no use, or else with a set of feelings which mislead and betray them.

In most parishes there are some people who have been turned from religion by the sin, or what seemed to them the sin, of a teacher of religion. Often the truth is that the clergyman has offended their prejudices, or has angered them by plain speaking about doctrine or duty. However, they go to church no more, they read their Bibles no more, they openly give up religion. Now if they would put into plain words what they do, and why they do it, could anything be more mournfully childish? The servant has displeased them, so they insult the Master. One man has done wrong, so they make up their minds to live in sin. One man has stumbled, so they leave the road to heaven, and turn into the other path. One man is not as

good as he ought to be, so they put from them the joys of religion and the help of grace. The messenger has offended them, so they will have no more to do with God Almighty.

What more wicked folly could men, made to think, and able to act as reasonable beings, be guilty of? They act like a man who would refuse bread because a baker or a farmer had fallen into some disgrace; or like a man who would take poison, or refuse aid in sickness because a few physicians have not been worthy of their great profession.

People who live without religion ought to have some reason to give. Not to think on such a question is to be dull, as few would like to own themselves. If a reason be given, it should be one that does not make all earnest and thoughtful men ask sadly whether those who give it have minds which are of any use.

SURE OF GOD.

GOD is love: and God is true. He wills the good of man, and does all He can to win those whom He has made to choose what is good for them. The power to be happy and the wish for happiness which we feel, are put into us by Him. He tells us how to seek and gain what will be to us lasting happiness. If we find in our hearts any true wish, however weak and trembling, to please God, this is proof of His work in us leading us in the way to the blessing which He loves to bestow. If we are ashamed of sin and long to be free from it, this is the sign of God's Spirit warning us away from that which shuts us off from the Divine blessing. It is a pledge that God is ready to set us free from the guilt and from the hold and from the stain of sin. If we feel drawn towards goodness, as if there were a want in our hearts which God's love and God's holiness alone can fill, this is the dawning of that love, the call to seek, and the promise that we shall not seek in vain. We never can hate sin as God hates it,

or long to be holy as God longs to make us holy. Our deepest and most earnest feelings are very faint signs of what is in the fatherly heart of our God.

We know, or ought to know, that God seeks our salvation. He can give no stronger proof than He has given in the gift of His Son. If we seek our salvation, then we merely take sides with God, and unite ourselves in one aim with Him. Let no one waste time in wondering whether God will help him or not—whether God will hear his prayer, and send the needful grace. The wish to be helped comes from God. The prayer we pray is inspired by God. The grace to desire grace is God's gift. Let us take God for granted, and act upon the facts of what God is and what God has promised. If we do this, then time spent in vain questions will be saved for work, time spent in anxiety will be passed in peace and glad hope, God will be honoured, instead of being grieved by our doubts. And, when we take God as true we shall find Him true; we shall find that the half was not told us of all that we might gain. So experience will give us a hope to lead us on to a yet higher life of faith and love. What God does will make us go forward bravely, sure of what He will go on doing for our more perfect holiness and our fuller joy.

DOUBTING GOD.

MANY men go on in sin, because they do not think they need fear God. They forget that His eye is on them. They seem too small to be watched by Him who reigns over all worlds. Even if God be real to them, they doubt whether He indeed can care what one man does. They hope that He will pass them by, that His greatness will forget their sin, or that His mercy will spare them in the end. So they live on away from God. While they might draw near they refuse. They pass from earth to meet

God once and once only—to go away for ever. Forced into the Presence which they shunned while they could, they see One who has read all their lives, and who knows all their hearts as if they had been alone in all the worlds. The truth is plain to them now. But it is too late to act upon it. They have reached the end of their life's path, and they must stay where it has led. The harvest is come, and what they have sown in their hearts they must reap.

But many do not get free from sin, do not grow in grace, or gain the joy and peace which they might make their own, because they doubt God's love. They cannot lay hold on His promises as truths indeed. They cannot realise what Christ has done. They see how weak they are, how mean and how unworthy, and they ask—"Can God care for such as I am? Will He wash away all my sin? Will He give me His own Life, His grace, Himself, and bring me to His home? Can I be loved by God? Can I be the temple of the Spirit? Can I ever rise from my low place to be the friend of angels, and to share the glory of God's chosen sons?" So the doubt rises, and the heart of the man who longs to get free from sin and live a pure life sinks. The hope set before him seems too great and too far away for him to try to reach. He gives up the effort, or he is held back and saddened while he struggles on.

But this is sin. It is unbelief—it is making God untrue. Has God spoken, and shall we not take Him at His word? If the love He tells us of is too great for man to show, is it too great for God? If the wisdom and the power are vast, are they beyond what can be in the Almighty and all-wise? If we have a care for our souls, is not that care God's own gift? He has not put it into our hearts to mock us with a vain desire. What He teaches us to long for He will not fail to give. And has not God made us? Surely He did not make us to sin. He did not give us life, that we might die for ever. He did not give us powers of joy, that we might burn in endless woe. He tells us that His glory and our purity

and bliss are one. He deigns to tell us that He grieves for our sin, and that when we seek for holiness and our true joy, all heaven is glad. And has He not done for us more than we can tell? Ought not that to be a pledge of what He is ready to do now? He will not leave the work He has begun? He will do it to the end, if we will only let Him, and not set up our wills against His, or hinder Him by our want of trust. He never grows tired like man, or turns coldly from those whom He has led to count upon His love. As a father loves his children, so God is tender even to the prodigals. He longs to have all ever near Him, that they may enjoy His love in full, and be at peace in the calm and plenty of His home.

When we are anxious for our souls, and show care for their well-being, let us remember the care for them that God has shown. What do we do, what do we bear, what do we give up of what is dear and pleasant? Oh, how little is it all! And yet we do not doubt that we are in earnest, that we are anxious that we should not die, and that we long for heaven, and wish to love and serve our God. What has God done for each of us. Oh, how dear the gift! Oh, how great beyond all price the Sacrifice! Has He not given His own Son, and given Him to die? Has He not borne our want of heart, our love of sin, our cold forgetfulness? Does He not bear what must be hardest of all—our doubt of His truth and love? Does He not come to dwell in our souls, to plead with us, and be our strength? Does He not call and warn us, day by day? Do not voices ever sound in our ears, speaking words like those of S. Paul—"We pray you, in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech you by us, Receive not the grace of God in vain."

DOUBT.

ANY fool can doubt. No brains or reading are wanted to make a man an unbeliever. The smaller a man's mind is, and the less it has in it, the more easily can it be "made up" to question and deny. The thoughtless, who do not see or feel the seriousness of the subjects before them, are ready to put them aside with a silly sneer. Any man can, with small trouble, get up a few objections to Christian revelation or Church doctrine, and pass himself off as clever among the ignorant. Thoughtful, well-informed believers pity him: for they know all he knows; they have heard it all, perhaps before he was born: but they know more than he; they know the replies; they know the strength of the fortress, while he only knows of the smartness of one or two assaults, which have been repulsed and have left the walls unbreached. Many young people, now-a-days, seek a character for cleverness by professing unbelief. Often they do not even know clearly what it is that they doubt: they have never put plainly before them, so as to be able to write it down, the meaning of what claims their faith. They have read a book or a magazine, or heard someone talk; and they have not ability or information to weigh what to their simplicity has seemed new and wise. To well-read and thoughtful Christians they are like little boys who strut along the streets, with a grand air, smoking pipes or cheap cigars. They do not like it, they know it is not good for them, they are half afraid of the consequences, but they think it fine.

There are others who wish to be free to take their own course—to eat and drink and follow the leading of their animal desires, to choose their own pleasures and their own way of gain. The claims of religion interfere with their liberty. They feel that it is madness to own the truths of revelation, and to go on as if there were no such

truths. They are glad to be able to quiet their consciences by persuading themselves that perhaps the warnings of religion rest on no sure facts. They welcome doubts, and take the statements of unbelief without examination.

But there are others who cannot see their way, though they want to do so, and believe that they do try honestly. They are sad and anxious, and no light seems to come. Sometimes they look for too much. They ask God to take away all need of faith, and force Himself and His truth upon them by signs and proofs too startling to be resisted. Sometimes, again, they fail to remember how solemn the question is, and with what serious reverence it should be approached. If a man puts his Maker on the defensive, and questions Him as an equal or an inferior, he cannot expect to be shown truth. God hides Himself from those who are unwilling to obey. If any man is willing to follow the light given to him, and to do the will of God as far as it is made known, he shall not be left without light enough to guide his steps. And as he goes forward with the earnest purpose to be right and to do right, he shall find the shadows clear away from before him. Faith shall feel firmer ground on which to rest, and shall see its object with more and more certainty. And the path of duty shall grow plainer, lit up by light from heaven. The dawn of truth on the soul is like the dawn of daylight, gradual and slow, but to those who have eyes to look for it, sure. It comes by degrees, as the man grows in power to use it safely.

I DON'T HOLD WITH IT.

"FATHER does not hold with Jack, because he's not drunken." In these words a woman explained her husband's dislike to one of his sons, the only one who lived a sober decent life. This life was a rebuke to his, and he was angry that any one of his children should refuse to join in the coarse pleasures of the tap-room, where he

spent most of his time when he was not at work. He had no taste for higher, better things. He knew nothing of the worth of the many means of true enjoyment and of self-improvement within his reach. He scoffed at what he did not understand, or was too low in mind and taste to care for.

It need hardly be said that the same man did not "hold with" Baptism, that he laughed at Confirmation, and thought it the height of folly to go to Holy Communion. His ignorance made him feel quite sure that he knew all about these matters; there was no doubt in his mind, for he did not think. It seemed to him that he had full right to give his judgment, and that it was enough for him to say of any truth of God, or means of grace, "I don't hold with it."

These words, or words that mean the same thing, are on the lips of most men who set aside God's truth, or God's will, or God's ways of Salvation. The less men know, the more ready they are to settle great questions off hand, as if they knew all about them. The lower sin has sunk them among thinking beings, the less fear they have in meeting any claim made on them in God's name, with a quiet "I don't hold with it."

Whether we "hold with" a thing or not makes no change in the thing. If it be a duty, it is not less or more so from the fact that we do not "hold with it." If it be a truth of God, our not "holding with" it leaves it still a part of the Christian faith which God means us to believe. If it be a means of grace, we surely lose from the neglect of it, however firm we may be in saying that we "don't hold with it." God is independent of us. It rests with Him to fix our duty and to make His claim upon our obedience. It rests with Him to make known His truth; and He is sinned against by those who doubt His word or treat His statements as not worth looking into, as much as by those who wilfully or carelessly break His laws. It rests with Him to show us how to draw near for the gifts of grace we need, and He has a right to ask that we come in simple faith and obedience. Men ought to take

care lest when they say "I don't hold with" this or that, their words mean—"I don't hold with God's judgment about truth or duty; I don't hold with His ways of helping souls; I don't hold with God."

And the question may well be asked—"Who are you? what right have you to speak on such questions?" A man who said he did not "hold with" the teachings of a science that he had never studied, or with the ways of working at some handicraft that he had never learned, would quickly get a lesson in modesty. Nothing makes thoughtful people more sick than the way in which the ignorant and shallow speak of the deep truths and the mysterious workings of God.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN IT.

"I DON'T believe in everlasting punishment." This was the remark of a man in a railway carriage to a friend whom he had drawn into talk about religious questions. Had the man been asked what he meant by "everlasting" and what he meant by "punishment" he would, most likely, have been at a loss to give an answer. But it did not come into his head to have any clear thoughts on so great a matter; he spoke boldly, as people do when they know and think little. He spoke as if the matter rested with him to settle, and that if there were such a thing possible as going on in sin, and so going farther away from God, and from good, for ever, his opinion would make it impossible. His friend did not argue the question. It was too long and solemn a one to enter on at the time. He merely gave the quiet answer—"The question is not what you believe or think; but whether the doctrine is true, whether there is such a thing or not."

God's work goes on, whether we like it or not. God has His own ways, and does not change because men wish Him to act otherwise. Much that He does is like Him-

self—far above our reach to understand or judge. Our part is to learn what we can of what He says. All that He tells us is true, though we may not know how it is true. All that He teaches is for our learning, though we can as yet find out only a part of what it means, and must learn with pains and slowly. All that He commands is to guide us, and we are bound to obey. All that He warns us of will come to pass, whether we believe it or not: all that He promises is surely ready to be given, whether we gain or miss it. What we believe and act upon makes no change in God. It makes an infinite difference in us and in our hope.

SHOW ME THY FAITH.

YOU say you trust in Christ, and in Him alone. How do you show your faith?

No one but Christ could win salvation for a dying world. Only God knew what was needed to save man from sin, and from the end of sin. Only God could find the means. God in Christ has done all. We may be saved now, if we will. No one of us need perish. Sick and weak though our souls are, they need not die. The Good Physician can give us life and health that will never fail. He cares for us; He bends over us in love and pity. With all the strength of His tender heart, He longs to lift us up and make us whole. He knows well what is best for each of us, and He knows what none of us can do without. All He asks us is to leave ourselves in His hands, and to trust our case to Him. And surely this is not too much for Him to ask. We know we cannot heal ourselves. We say that He is our one hope, and that we have no other. Those who have trusted Him tell us how they have been helped, how He has kept all His promises, and done more for them than they ever thought of.

You say, "I do trust in Him." How do you show it?

Do you take care to avoid all that He tells you is dangerous? Do you try to do all that He says you ought to do, and follow His advice as to the kind of life you need to live? Do you take all the remedies He offers, and use fully and regularly every means He provides? Do you guard against what would hinder these means from having their proper effect? Or do you simply content yourself with saying that you trust Him, while all you do proves that you have no faith in Him at all?

Let me tell you a story. A poor man was very sick, with a painful and dangerous complaint. Many of his neighbours had died of it, and he knew very well the sad time that was before him, and the sad end, if no cure could be found. He tried to heal himself with some common medicines, but he only got worse. When he was almost in despair, some friends told him of a famous doctor who had a way of treating his complaint which had never failed, and could not fail. The doctor was sent for, and when he had examined him, he told him at once that he would make a perfect cure. He said it was a bad case, but one which would yield to his treatment in time, on one condition. "You must," he said, "put entire faith in me, and follow my directions exactly, and not allow any other doctors to interfere." The man promised readily, and the doctor left him different medicines to take and directions to follow, and provided a nurse to see that all was done. The patient seemed better at once; he was full of hope and gratitude. He could talk of nothing but the kindness of the doctor, and the skill which he showed in knowing all that was wrong with him. He was quite sure of being soon well. He said he had the most entire faith in the doctor, and would trust no one else.

After a while the physician came again to see him. He found the patient full of joy at meeting him, and loud in his professions of confidence and of gratitude. The physician looked at him, and saw there was no real change for the better. Some of the symptoms were more alarming, and new ones had shown themselves. He asked the

man whether he had trusted him. "Perfectly," was the reply; "I put my entire faith in you." "How is this, then, that all these bottles are full still? you have not touched them." "Ah," said the patient, "I don't trust in bottles; I trust in you; it would be a slight on your skill to think that there was anything saving in all those things." The physician turned sadly to the nurse, afraid that there had been some neglect, and asked whether care had been taken to see his directions carried out. "I tried my best," said the nurse, "but found it no use. When I offered the medicines, he looked at them, and said he could not see how they could help him; that he only trusted in the doctor. When I urged him to take exercise, he said that to try to get well by what he did would be taking the work of curing him, and the credit of it, out of your hands. He has simply lain there, as he used to do, repeating over your name, and talking about his confidence in your skill and goodness." The doctor was very angry. "You have professed to believe in me, and you have shown that you have no faith in me at all. I gave you medicines, and you have wasted them, because you did not know why I had given them, or what I know of their value. You have refused the help of the person I left to see my directions carried out. Till you are able to trust me, I can do nothing for you."

Are you perhaps like this man? Do you talk of faith in Christ, and hope to be saved by Him, while you neglect the means of grace which He offers, and are careless about the help and warnings of His Church? Do you think you honour Him while you undervalue the Sacraments of His love, and do not strive to grow strong by holy living, in the way Christ guides you, for which His spiritual medicines give you power?

He has faith in Christ who takes what Christ gives, no matter in what way or form, no matter how pride must be humbled. He trusts in Christ who does what Christ tells him, no matter how useless it seems, or how much trouble it costs. Value for the Sacraments and diligence in holy living are the great and sure tests of

faith. We prize means of grace on Christ's word and for His sake. We try to live holily, like the man who stretched out a withered hand; and, like him, find strength as we obey.

THE COMMANDMENTS.

IT is hard to put before the mind the awfulness of what Israel saw and heard at Sinai. The words of the nineteenth chapter of Exodus are plain and full of power: but they only help us a little to think of what made Moses "exceedingly fear and quake." In that wild, lonely desert, among the dark shadows of the rocky mountain, was a scene fit to solemnise the people. They must indeed have felt how awful their God was, and how helplessly they were in His hands, when the sights and sounds that told of His coming down to them grew more and more dreadful. Well might all the people tremble when, on the third day, "There were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud," and when the "whole mount quaked greatly" because "the Lord descended upon it in fire." Israel would be ready to hear humbly the law made known in such a dread manner. All would fear, and know that it was no light thing to sin against such a God.

God is the same now that He was then. He was the God whose name is Love, when Israel quailed before Him. And He is as awful now in His might and holiness. We are not free to trifle with God; we dare not make light of His will, or be heedless in His presence, any more than Israel. Men need to be warned of this, nowadays. Much of what is said and thought about the Jewish and Christian Churches is as if God were changed, and were not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

That law which Moses was given has not lost its claim on us. Christ says that he has not come to destroy, but fulfil it. He gives it deeper and more spiritual meaning. We are asked, not for less, but greater holiness of life than God's people in old days. For we have a union with God through His Son which they had not. We have Christ's spotless, perfect pattern. We have the help of the New Testament Scriptures to unfold God's will more clearly. We have means of grace which bring into us the very presence and power of God to rule and guide and make strong our natures. The Holy Spirit, who helped men in all ages, has come to be in us, to write God's law in our hearts, and be our power to show it in our lives. He gives the love, which more and more casts out slavish fear, and changes the will till it is one with God's will, and we do what pleases our Father with the glad readiness and trust of children.

But God is still greatly to be feared. He is still the God before whose awful might and holiness Israel shrank. We must take care lest we neither fear nor love Him. If we fear Him, we may be brought to find that He, though so awful in His glory, is our Father, near whom alone is joy and safety, and that His power is for us. Nothing but love has a right to cast out fear, or can do it in a way to last. How true and deep the love must be which can enable us to meet with no alarm the God of Sinai! Love is true if it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, who wherever He finds a home in man, writes God's law in the heart, and makes the life a doing of the will of God from the heart.

GOD'S LAW.

PEOPLE fall into great mistakes about God's law. Some think that God makes it known, but does not mind whether men keep it or not, if only they believe that Christ

kept it, and bore in their stead all that their sin deserves. Some think that the law is not meant to be obeyed, but only to show men how bad they are, and how helpless to do anything that is good. Some think the law of God need not be used as a guide in life, to show men how to go right, but is useful to mark how far men have gone wrong, that they may ask for pardon.

All this is quite false, or else only in part true. No one can wonder that religion is so weak to make the world better, when such mistakes are so common.

God's law tells us God's will—what He wants us to do and not to do, that we may become by the practice of holiness what He wants us to be. It tells us how to steer our course through all life from first to last, so as to win all good and keep clear of all harm. It tells us how to be safe from the sin that tempts men into snares and holds them fast. It tells us how to act so that we may spend life growing in holiness, instead of laying up sin to be repented of, and gaining bad habits to be shaken off with sore effort. It tells us how to enjoy the blessing and favour of God, not only at the end of this life, but through all our days. It assures also of the grace which our Father is ready to give to enable us to live holily; for every Commandment is a promise; every word that makes known God's will is a pledge of His help to obey it. The law of God teaches us, His children, how we may please our Father and show the love we feel towards Him who has first loved us.

MAN'S FOES.

SATAN is man's great foe. He hates God and hates us. He tries to draw us away from God, that we may follow him. He is evil, and does all he can to make us evil too. He has lost all hope by his sin, and his life's aim seems to be to drag us down from what is good, that we

may lose hope and heaven and share his ruin. God tells us this plainly, that we may know our danger and be on our guard. We do well to watch and pray, for we have much to lose, and our enemy is strong. We have all felt his power; we all suffer from his hate. We see all round us the sad blight that has fallen on the world through him. Sickness, death, woe—these are his bad work. They all come from sin that he tempted man to let into his soul.

And yet, is this the whole truth? Is Satan man's worst foe? Can he do with us what he likes? Can he ruin us by himself? If we think of it we shall see at once that he is not the foe we have most to fear. Our true danger is from ourselves; for we are stronger than he. God is on our side, and is ever ready to stand between us and harm. Only when we leave our Friend, and listen, like Eve, to our cunning enemy, can he do us any hurt. Satan could not have robbed man of his purity and his life if man had not turned traitor to himself. He could not have spoiled the world that God had made so fair and good, if man had not helped him.

And now we need not be led into sin. We need not lose our souls. All the evil Satan brings on us is with our consent. He cannot ruin our hope, and shut us out of the heaven that Christ died to win for us, if we do not help him. Very few there are who resist the devil, though God tells them that if they do this he will and must flee from them. Most men are fond of going where they know he is and God is not. They wander out alone, where he finds them and leads them away like sheep to the slaughter. They listen to what he says, and are glad to take the sinful joys he offers. They put God out of their hearts, and leave the door open. Then Satan comes in, and soon what was the temple of the Holy Spirit is made so unclean that God cannot dwell there any more, and Satan has it to himself.

MOCKING GOD.

WHAT a changed world this would be if all the vows were kept which have been made to God in times of sorrow! How many a home, now dark and hopeless through the sin of father and mother, would be bright with Heaven's blessing! What joy would be in hearts which now are breaking! The churches would be too few and small to hold the crowds thronging to praise God and seek His grace. Jails would be almost empty. The workhouses would not need to be one half their present size. Crime, poverty, sickness, would be rare. The world would be full of men and women pressing on towards heaven, cheering and helping one another by the way.

It is sad to think of what might be, and then see what is. God looks from family to family, from man to man, and, of nearly all, the words are true which were spoken of Israel long ago—"When He slew them, they sought Him, and they returned and enquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer; nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their mouth, and lied unto Him with their tongue."

These are awful words—to flatter God! to lie to Him! Surely we have never dared to do that! This is what you say, and perhaps you mean it. But only think. Look back through your life, and call to mind the promises you have made to Heaven, when God's hand was laid on you. Remember what you said in your prayers then, that you would be; look at yourself now, and say whether you have flattered God and lied unto Him or not.

You have not forgotten those days when you lay in a dark room, sick, and weak, and helpless. You did not think that you could ever be well and strong again. You felt dying. The world seemed slipping from under you, and you thought that you would very soon be away, where

the souls of the dead go. Then you found out what the world was worth. Whether you were well off or ill off in it made little matter. Other things crowded on you. And when your mind could fix itself you could only think of these. You were alone with God. You felt Him near you, and this made you look at yourself. You saw all your life. The sin, the carelessness of it, was heaped, as it were, in a great load upon your soul. You knew that you were not fit to meet your Judge. How you trembled at the dark door of death you thought you were getting near to! How you shrank from what was at the other side You prayed then. You did not care who heard you. If your worst companions had been at your bedside, you would not have been laughed out of your prayers. You vowed that if God raised you, you would live for Him only. You would think life only too short to serve Him, and prove your gratitude. And you meant all this; you were sure you were sincere. Ah, that was no time for trifling. You did not dare to try to deceive Him who looked you through and through. "Nevertheless, you did but flatter Him with your mouth, and lied unto Him with your tongue."

God in mercy raised you up. Little by little your health came back; and little by little your heart got cold; you turned away from God. Now and then you had a misgiving. Perhaps you went to Church, and said your prayers, and were more thoughtful for awhile. But very soon you were your own self again. No; not that; seven times worse—harder, more helpless, less likely ever to be God's. You cried to God because you were afraid of death; now death seems not so near, you don't think about it. You were a beggar; now you have got what you wanted; what have you to do with God any more? Time enough when you get ill again; then you will go over the same thing. You will pray and make promises. Will God hear you? Are you sure that He will not take you away in the midst of your sin, or harden you, and let your soul sleep on in carelessness, till it wakens where there is no rest?

CHRISTIAN JOY.

WE are sinners, and have much to sadden us; but, as God's children, we have more to make us glad. We are apt to feel as if the bright seasons of the Christian year did not suit us so well as the times of mourning and penitence. Our voices catch readily the tones of humiliation in Advent and Lent, but the happy songs of Christmas and Easter seem as if hardly meant for us to share. We need both; one helps the other and guards it. Joy is more welcome after sorrow. The remembrance and the hope of joy save us from being crushed by sorrow. Our love and hope might fail were it always Advent; our holy fear might fail were it always Christmas.

Joy has its work to do for us and in us, as well as sorrow. Joy is the end of sorrow. Sorrow is only good as a means to joy, which is good in itself. There is much joy in faith and hope and love. God is love, and He wills that we should be as glad as it is safe for us to be. It is our duty to make others as happy as we can; we are bound to aim at true joy ourselves. The worship and the life that are most joyful are most like those of heaven. Good is stronger than evil; joy is greater than sorrow. Even though we feel our sin sore, and have many griefs and cares, still, if we are on the side of good, we do well to be happy. The woes of Christ should make us mourn; but His joy calls us to rejoice with Him, and the glory He has now is ground for heartfelt praise.

Many very good people are all wrong in this matter. They seem afraid to be bright or glad. Instead of winning the young by cheerfulness, they make them shrink from religion as a dark and gloomy thing. They look and speak as if religion had taken away all relish for earthly joy, and had given nothing instead. God means us to own the pleasure He makes ready for us in the good things of life. He is not honoured by our turning from them with

scorn, as if we thought them not worth having. He only warns us against those pleasures which bring loss or shame. He only lays sorrow on us to bring us joy, or save us from heavier sorrow. He asks self-denial for our greater after-blessedness, and to help the joy of our brethren.

There is an old saying that Christ never smiled. Is not this to take from our idea of His perfection as man? We can believe that He never laughed—that He was too much wrapped up in the earnest pressing towards the aim of His life. But surely He smiled; surely there was ever a shining out of the love and brightness of His spirit. He rejoiced in spirit at times, and that inward joy must have lit up His face. The joy set before Him was in view while He endured the Cross, and felt the shame of no account. Must not those about Him have often wondered at the strange glory which the vision before His soul of that glorious future would give to His features! How could He have won the trust of the children and of the mourners, if He never smiled upon them in tender love and kindly sympathy! There are some old pictures which represent our Lord as the man of sorrows, and yet at the same time the man of joy. His face has a look of unspeakable grief; but like the gleam of the sunshine from behind a cloud, the eyes and the whole expression tell of a deep joy, which will come out in its glory when the shadows have passed. In all His tribulation, Christ was exceeding joyful; for He knew Him whose will He did; He foresaw the end and triumph; He had the grand, strong feeling of bearing a great load firmly, and fighting a hard war with true, brave heart. He wants us to be like Him, sorrowful for what is sad and evil, but always ready to rejoice in all that is bright and good; weeping with those that weep, but full of sympathy with even the least every-day joy of men.

WHATEVER RELIGION WE LIKE BEST.

"IT is no matter what a man's religion is. One is as good as another. We are all going to the same place. We shall not be asked what we have called ourselves." This sounds well; it looks like truth, or else so many people would not say it and believe it. But it is great nonsense. It is false, and it shows how little care those who say it give to their souls' welfare. It is great "matter" what our religion is. It is great matter how we go to the place we hope to reach. If one religion has more help in it for the soul than another has, we lose by not making it ours. If one way of going towards heaven is safer than another, more comforting and more quick and straight, that is the way which, as wise men and women, we must take. No one thinks it a trifle what sort of food he gets, or what sort of doctor treats him when he is ill. No one is careless whether he travels by a steady train, or in a rickety gig with an unbroken runaway horse. A man may live on gruel, but he wants to thrive and be strong. A man may get over the bungling and the bad drugs of a quack doctor, but most men like to have the best skill and the purest drugs, if a limb is broken or a lung weak. A man may find himself safe at the end of a journey after braving the danger of driving an untrained horse, but few like to risk their necks when they can help it. Now, surely we ought to be as careful to do the best for our souls, and secure for them all the help, strength, comfort, and blessing that are to be had. Surely we ought to know whether the food they get is pure and strength-giving, the medicine not mixed with poison. Surely we ought to set out for heaven in the surest and safest way God tells us of. It is great matter what our religion is. One is far better than others. We are not going to the same place, for some shall be found fit for greater glory in heaven, some for less. We shall not indeed be asked what we have "called ourselves." What we are

found on the Day of Judgment will show what we have *been* all along, and what means of grace have helped us.

True, some who have had small privileges shall be higher than those who have had great. But this says nothing about the value of the privileges, only about the use which has been made of them. Those who make good use of what they have and know of, shall be blessed accordingly. Those who have wasted ten talents, or only made profit that might have been made by one, shall be judged. If we do not use the best means of grace within our reach, we sin. If we do not show the power and good of them by proving what they are able to make us, we sin also.

We have no right to "do as we like" in choosing our religion. We must do as God likes. If He has founded a Church, we dare not say that in it no special grace is stored. If He tells us to wash in Jordan, we have no right to say that other rivers are as good. There is no doubt that Christ has set up a Church on earth, which has been since the time of the Apostles. There is no doubt that He has given in it means of grace and Sacraments. Of course we know nothing till He tells us. We must take His word, and not go beyond or fall short of it. He knows what He does, and why He does it. The safe and humble, and the right and common-sense course, is to believe His word, and act on it.

One thing more. If we have better food, or a better doctor than other men, we have no right to abuse them or call them hard names because they are not so well off. We must wish that they shared our good fortune, and try to help them, but we must not despise them, or laugh at them. And so, if we are sure that we have a better religion than others, the way to make others of our mind is to show that our religion makes us strong and healthy Christians, able and ready to do hard work for God, full of love and gentleness and goodness towards our fellow men. If we believe that Christ is more with us, through the means of grace we use, let us prove it to ourselves and others, by showing more perfectly than others the spirit and the mind of Christ.

AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST.

THE sleep of the body refreshes and revives. Sleep is indeed an image of death; but waking is an image of resurrection. The once tired energies are fresh and active; the wasted nervous strength is restored, the man is ready for the work of a new day. But it is not so when the soul sleeps. That sleep is not only an image of death; it is the beginning of death and decay. The soul sleeps when the clouds of unbelief hide heavenly things, and darkness closes over it. It dreams of things that are unreal and that pass away. It knows not of the dangers that are always near. It forgets God. From that sleep there may be no awaking; if the call of God rouse the soul, ere it be too late, there is no sense of restored power, but of lost power; no rising up with fresh hope and courage to meet new duties; but shame and discouragement.

How earnest and watchful all should be against the beginning of sloth and languor! When the hands begin to hang down, and drowsiness creeps over the spiritual senses, then he who would not be among the dead must fear lest his soul sleep. When the truths of God lose their fresh power, when words of prayer grow to be only words, like the unthought-of mutterings of a languid one whose mind is sleepy and whose feelings are unstirred, then it is time to start up in fear, and cry out for help. When work for God is done with failing spirit, with lessening regularity, with growing thought of self, when means of grace are getting to be occasional duties rather than regular food and cheer, when tempters come readily and are welcomed without distrust, then there is cause for fear lest the soul fall into the sleep that is death.

"Awake, thou that sleepest," is God's summons to the languid soul: "Escape from the state of darkness in which the prince of darkness has thee in his power; cast off the works of darkness, the wages of which are paid in outer

darkness: 'Arise from the dead' and be not buried in corruption."

There is a promise, too: "Christ shall give thee light." Christ is the true "Light of men." He opens out heavenly things to the eye of the soul, and shows to faith the truths of which the Gospel tells. He sets clearly before hope the blessedness in store for those who long for and strive after gifts of grace and holiness. He gives light within the soul, even the light of God, enabling it to walk in the light, knowing and doing God's will, and preparing for the world where there is "no night" for ever.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

OUR Lord has come. God has forgiven man his sin; nor has He left him to climb alone from the state of death to which he fell. He came from heaven, was made flesh, and took upon Himself human nature, like unto our own. God bore in the person of His Son the weakness of human childhood, the toil and care of youth and of full age. He felt the sorrows of the poor, the weariness of the hard-worked, the loneliness of heart of the despised. More than this, He passed through the agony of an outcast's death. We are ashamed that for us, and because of our sin, One who loved us should bear all this. We grieve in all His grief. But yet we are glad and rejoice that we are so in the heart of God. The angels tell us as "glad tidings of great joy," that "unto us is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord." And it is right that we should hail each return of the season when the holy Church throughout all the world unites to sing the praises of the new-born King. What words can tell the thankfulness and hope that ought to be in the heart that has learned what the truths of Christmas mean! And it is well to bring together all harmless earthly joys to be hallowed and deepened by the special joy of Christmas.

That is the time for realising our union in the family of God, and for owning our claim on one another for Christian love. It is a good time also to rejoice together in all the brightness of home which God has given, to renew our friendships, and recall the pleasantness of old days.

Christ is not seen on earth now; but, when He rose to heaven, He did not forsake His people. He is nearer to us now than when men heard His voice, and could feel His hand of kindness touch them. "I will come unto you," He said; and we know that by His Spirit's power He is made present with us in manifold ways. He is ever coming; and we may come to meet Him, and receive Him. He is with His ministers and stewards, all the days, making their work for Him and for His people real. He is one with those who are "baptised into" Him, and have thus "put Him on." He is in the midst of every two or three who meet in His Name. He is present, when, in His own appointed way, He is asked to come to give His Body and His Blood, that His faithful ones may dwell in Him, and He may dwell in them. We are not left orphans, only rejoicing in what *has* been, and thinking of the great bliss of those who lived centuries ago. We have Christ with and in us, a never-failing source of strength and joy.

But there are better things in store. Those who use rightly the first coming of our Lord, and meet Him now with faith and love and an obedient will, look forward to another coming. Not in form of feeble infant, or lowly toiler for daily bread, or meek teacher, or patient crucified martyr, will Christ come. Nor will He come in a way to be only known and owned by faithful earnest souls. He will appear in power and great glory. Every eye shall see Him. Every foe shall fear Him. None shall dare then to question His will, or mock at the laws and customs of His kingdom. All falsehoods shall be unmasked. All truth shall be made plain. All wrongs shall be set right. Christ shall come to finish what He began at Bethlehem, and now patiently carries on in His Church and in the souls of men and women and children who will receive

Him as He comes to be their Saviour. He shall purify His Church that it may be a spotless bride. And from the nature of every true disciple He will cleanse away the last stain, and remove each lingering infirmity.

Come, Lord Jesus, now, and dispose my heart to give Thee a glad welcome, and yield my will and all I am to Thy control. Make me to trust in that work which Thou didst finish on the Cross, and which Thou dost now plead in heaven. Make me to seek and hail Thy coming in those means wherein Thou dost bid me wait for it. Be my strength to follow the steps of Thy holy life, and to grow like Thee day by day, so that Thy coming in glory may be my full redemption.

THE SEASON OF ADVENT.

WE cannot stay here long. Day by day we draw on towards the end of our time on earth. Whither are we going? Where shall we be when this world knows us no more?

Most men wish to go to heaven. There are not many who would say that they had not some hope of reaching it at last. And yet how few seem to care whether they are in the right way or not, or make any effort to move on. Some will say that they mean to go to heaven, and yet each step they take brings them farther from it; their backs are turned towards the place which they want to reach. Whenever they think, they must know what they are doing; but they go on. The way they are taking is pleasant and easy, and there are many, side by side with them, who tell them that in the end all will be right. They don't like the look of the hard climb up the hill towards heaven. They think that they can turn back in time if they find it needful. So they go on, till their strength is worn out, and their days are almost all spent. At length they see that there is no home or rest on the

road by which they travel. They look back towards the bright city which they have been leaving so far behind. They try to gain it; but the time is too short, and their strength is too feeble. They can never get there; they can only lay them down wearily and die in the ways of sin.

There are others who indeed long for heaven, and are always trying to go towards it, but spend much toil in vain. They choose their own way, and walk in it as they like. They will not study the Book that has been given to guide them. They are too proud to ask for advice and help from those whom God has sent to lead His pilgrims. They are so sure that all is well, that they do not watch their steps, nor guard against the dangers that meet them in the path. They go near the edge of steep places; they run in the way of enemies; and they feel so strong that they even think little of the food and medicine—the means of grace—which have been given to cheer and help them on their journey. So it is that very often they are all wrong. The road they take seems to go side by side with the right one, and to lead in the same direction; but it is the way of sin and wilfulness, which only ends in death. Very often, though they begin well, they soon turn aside through carelessness, and are lost. Very often they faint and perish, because, when their souls are weak and hungry, they will not know it, and will not take the spiritual food which God puts before them.

There are others, who never make any effort or take any trouble; they seem to think that they will find themselves in heaven at last, while they never try to move from where they are. They read about heaven, and use their thoughts much, and wish for the joys and the peace of which they are told; but they never ask how far they are away from the state of holiness which is heaven. They do not try to be helped and guided by God. They never rise up to walk in the way which is plain before them. They act like men who, if they wished to go to London, should expect to get there by reading about it, and finding out the way, and longing for a share in its glory and its riches.

Sometimes people deceive themselves, and will make no effort, because, as is quite true, only God's grace can bring them to the place they seek. So they will not bring themselves where God's grace is, or use it when it is put in their way. They act like men who, if they wanted to go to London, should sit still in their homes, saying that there was no use going to the railway station, because London could only be reached by train.

CHRIST LIVED, DIED, LIVES.

CHRIST died for sinners. He is our hope, when weary and heavy laden and ashamed we look for pardon and hope and rest. Well it is for us to cling to His cross and trust in His cleansing blood.

But this is not all. Christ lived for us before He died. He left us an example that we should follow His steps. He bids us mark His pure, spotless life, and try to be what He was in the world, and do as He did, in childhood, in growing years, all through our way to the end. We must not forget this. There is no coming to Him that He will own, but that of those who take His yoke, and learn of Him, and try to be with Him and grow like Him. He wants to save us from the stain and power of sin. He wants to make us His own people, purified for Himself and zealous of good works.

Jesus lived and He died for us, but this is not yet all. We cannot get the good of His death if we do not follow His life. But how can we follow His life? We may look at it, but that does not give us power to copy it, any more than gazing at birds will make us able to fly like them.

The Lord Jesus lives now for us. In heaven He pleads for us; from heaven He sends us gifts of grace. And in His Church, and in His people He lives. He is in the means of grace which He gives. He is in those who are one with Him by faith and by the Sacraments. So by

His life now He helps us to copy His life written in the Gospels, and to become more and more like Him. In this way His example is like no other. He shows us what we ought to be and do, and gives us the power to be and do it. He is at the same time our Example and our Strength. He helps us to get the benefit of His death, and by His loving grace makes us able to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He goes before them, leading them safely in the toilsome, dangerous way. He lifts them up and lays them upon His own strength, carries them in His arms, bears them on His shoulders, till He cometh home, and they are folded in peace.

A FRESH START.

WHEN men go on for any length of time in any work or way of life, they get used to it, so that what they have to do can be done almost without thinking. They form what is called a habit. They move like a machine, and would need to make an effort to turn out of their even course, or do things in a new way. This is a great help in most cases. It lightens toil, and makes sure that work is done, and done well. But in some cases there is danger of all a man does becoming of no value. As habit grows strong, the heart, the mind, the will are less asked to help. And without the work of these, many a grand-looking deed is worthless. It is, of course, a good thing to be practised in holiness, and to have skill in work for God; but God does not count mere doing; he prizes everything by the spirit which guides it. He does not want praying machines, or machines for carrying on works of charity. He wants earnest, loving hearts and brave wills. All the better if the tongue can speak clearly and to the point; but He wants a true devotion to guide it. All the better

if the hands are grown quick by use in doing good; but He wants the hands to obey a living, loving heart, and a will that has an end before it.

Those who are honestly trying to live a good life will find it easier as they go on. Of course, new temptations will meet them, and new duties will arise; but the common path of religion will become more and more a matter of course. They will go to church, without thinking of staying away. They will say their prayers, and read their Bibles, just as regularly as they take their meals. They will go through their preparation for Communion as a part of life that could not be left out. Old sins, such as lying and swearing and quarrelling, will be things quite put away and kept off. But they need to take care. All this, good and right and matter for thankfulness as it is, may lead them into new danger. They do it all so easily and of course, that there may be little or no life or soul in it.

For this reason it is well to have times of careful self-examination, over and above the regular watching of the life. We ought to call ourselves up for trial, now and then, and search our hearts and lives, and question all we do, just as if we were strangers and had never seen ourselves before. We should see and make sure what we are doing, and not be content with this. A great deal more is needed before we can be sure what our state is, and how we are getting on. There are other questions. Why do we act as we do? Is the fire burning—the fire of love? Is our movement the work of busy living zeal, or only the going on from a force that once started us, but has long since ceased work? Are we comforting ourselves by what we were, and not by what God sees us now to be?

The great fasts of the Church are good seasons for doing this. And there are other times when thoughts come which will help us, such as the beginning of a new year, our birthday, or the anniversary of our Confirmation or first Communion. We all are in danger of getting heartless, and moving like dead machines. We all need from time to time to make a fresh start.

CHRIST MANIFEST.

CHRIST is not much known in the world, because He is not much shown. Men talk about Him, and write about Him, but they do not live Him. And so people fail to learn about Him in any clear, true, helpful way. Children learn best by pictures. What is told in their ears often gives them very faint, and even wrong thoughts about things. Put a picture before their eyes, and they grasp the truth and keep it. We are all like children in this. We need to be taught, not only by hearing, but by seeing, if we are to learn well. It is needful to read and explain what God tells us of our Saviour; but the great power to make Christ real to men, and win them to love Him, is in lives which show Him. One man in whom Christ lives, guiding the words and acts of the life, will do more than twenty clever teachers in whom His Presence is not seen. Many men who hold up Christ to honour with their lips, hold Him up to scorn in their lives. It were almost better that they did not speak of Him; for men think more of the kind of Christ they show in their common deeds and words than of Him they say they know. Thus more harm than good is done.

We all know that it is hard to tell anyone how to do a thing. Books and lectures are a small help for learners in any practical work. But, do a thing before a man, and he sees how it is done, and knows readily the way to set about it for himself. So, if we want to teach men to fulfil Christian duties, to be patient, true, brave, pure, or to go right in any other way; the shortest, surest, and most forcible plan is to be these things and do these things before them. Each of us may thus be a light to lead men to Christ. Each of us may show the glory and goodness of Him, who by the power of the Spirit comes to dwell in men, making them beloved sons of God, in whom their Heavenly Father is well pleased. Each of us may

help to lead men to love to be what He is who changes the common things of earth into means of blessing, and meets the wants of man's soul with a rich supply of cheer and satisfaction.

REPENT YE.

THE first call that comes to man from God is to repent. This call we must hear when we begin our life for God. This call we need to obey all through our path till we are with God. What does the call mean; and how are we to obey it? Repentance is that "whereby we forsake sin." The word means a change of mind. He who repents looks at, and thinks of, and feels about sin in a new way, so that he longs and tries to get free from it. He knows what sin is, and what his own sin is. He sees what it does and leads to. He fears, and hates, and is ashamed of it.

We are called to repent that we may be set free from the guilt, and from the power of sin. We need to forsake sin in heart and in life, to cease to love it, and to cease to live it. Repentance brings us for pardon and for grace, that the past may be forgiven, and that the time to come may not bring new sin on the soul.

How are we to repent of sin? First we must know what our sins are. For it is of our own sins, not the common sins of the world, that we have to repent. If we want to weed a garden, we must first find the weeds; so if we want to repent of our sins, we must begin by searching our lives and our hearts. We have a rule given —the straight rule of God's laws, to set beside our lives, to show where they are crooked and wrong. We have a perfect man's life—the life of Christ, to show us what we ought to be, and are not. Sins of thought, word, and deed; sins of not feeling, and saying, and doing right; all must be found out, that we may repent of all. God

will help us, if we ask Him, and He will give us His light to make our sins plain. He will also show us the sin of past neglect which has allowed so many sins to be forgotten.

When we know our sins, the next thing is to feel rightly about them. We may know them quite well, and yet not care. We ought to bewail them—that is, to mourn about them; and moreover, we ought to grieve for our own sinfulness, that is, the evil in our nature which shows itself in the sins we find. But perhaps we do not mourn, or feel as if we could. God will help us, and we must try. There are two kinds of sorrow for sin. One comes from fear, the other from love. Both have power for good, but that which comes from fear is of no use if it does not lead to the other. We should think of the great might and holiness of Him against whom we sin, of the danger of daring Him and coming under His wrath. This may warn us from much evil, but it will not draw us to what is good. It may make us give up sin in life, but it will not make us hate it in our hearts. True godly sorrow comes when we think of the love and goodness and patience of the God we have wronged. We are roused to shame, while we view our sins as signs of ingratitude, and as wounds to divine love. As we grow more sorry, we shall feel more how much more sorry we ought to be, and shall sorrow for our want of sorrow, among our other signs of sinfulness.

What comes next? Are we to go on grieving? No; we are to open our grief. We know we have sinned against our Father; to Him we must go, bringing all our tale of shame and sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here is what we want; to have the sins of our life pardoned, and the unrighteousness of our natures taken away so that we may go and sin no more. To gain this end we must "confess our sins." The words are not "confess that we are sinners," but "confess our sins." This is a very different thing. Anyone can say, "I am a sinner," with no trouble, and no shame; but it

needs effort to lay before God, one by one, the weights that lie on the conscience. This God asks, not that He may know our sins, for they are all plain to Him, but that we may know them. While we tell them to Him we learn their number and their greatness in His sight, and what sins we need, most of all, to guard against in future. This is one end gained by doing what St. James advises, when he says, "confess your faults one to another." When we put the tale of our sin into words, and open our grief, we see it more plainly ourselves, and feel it a more real thing.

But when we have found out and bewailed and owned our sin, and sought pardon, this is not all. This is vain, unless we ask and mean to use grace, so as to be changed in heart and life. We must have a firm will to be holy, and not sinful; to cease to do evil and learn to do well.

When the soul first turns to God, this repentance is needful; but all who are in earnest will make their repentance a part of their life, a growing, deepening thing. Each night the life of the day past should be looked over, and the heart probed. Each night the sins and the sinfulness should be mourned before God, with a heart grieving more, because loving more, and more glad in the love of God. Each night the soul should press nearer to God for pardon and for strength. Each morning the resolution should aim at a higher path, a purer holiness, a more tender jealousy of the least sin or failure. There should be a growing effort to live a life which needs no repentance.

CONSIDER HIM.

WHO for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

What a dreadful life our Lord's was! how dreadfully it

ended! If we only think of it, from the manger to the cross, it seems to have been only woe, failure, vanity. It began in poverty, it was spent in hardship and loneliness, it ended in shame and agony. Each year brought its own new griefs and humiliation. At last the worst death crowned all. But was that life all woe? Was it a failure? Was He weak who lived and bore it? Was He destroyed, who laid it down and died? We know it was not so. Christ endured the Cross and despised the shame, for there was joy set before Him, and towards this He went bravely on. He saw, as the end of His work and suffering, glory and rest, and bliss for ever; and so His pain and weariness seemed light and but for a moment. Now He has risen, and gone up on high. He has won His great fight, He has gained His great reward. Now He can help souls with the gifts His love toiled for. Now He can give holiness and joy and heaven to men for whom He lived and died on earth.

Our lives are sad; friends and pleasures do not stay with us long; health fails; hopes are lost; soon we die. There is, indeed, very much to make life glad; but nothing lasts. We never know how quickly we may have to part with what is dearest. But is our life vain? Surely not. This life is only the beginning of our true life. We have a joy set before us, as Jesus had, which, like Him, we reach through a sad and trying way. Let us but keep the end in view, and no care or loss need daunt us. We shall die, but we shall rise again. We may lose all here: friends, and home, and health, and money may go from us. What matter, while we can know that our Lord prepares a place for us in heaven, and by what we suffer makes us ready for the place?

We all have our Passion-tide. Let us bear it and not lose courage, though the cross be heavy, though the nails be sharp, though the crown of thorns be humbling. All this tells us that Easter is close at hand. Then comes Ascension-tide; no more darkness, and shame, and death; nothing but glory, and life, and heaven for ever.

We need the Cross, and shame, and dying of our earthly

state. There is good and hope in all. All things work together for good, if we love God and seek to be brought to that purity and blessedness which He wills for us. Our toil and fighting are our training in strength and courage. Each sorrow parts us from something that holds us to earth. Each joy that goes away is meant to lift our thoughts and hearts upward, where our treasure is being stored. Death is meant to break us wholly loose from the flesh and the world, that we may be free to rise to a pure life in the home of God.

But if our hope is all here, then indeed our life is madness. Better far for us that we were like the brutes that perish than that we should live our short life on earth with no joy set before us, only a fearful looking for of judgment and despair.

JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION.

WE "look for the resurrection of the dead." This cheers us when our hearts are sad for friends who have gone away, and we are lonely, longing for the silent voices. This cheers us as our own strength fails, and we are warned by many signs that soon our spirits must put off the tabernacles in which they dwell on earth. We do not look, as St. Paul says, to be "unclothed," disembodied spirits, but to be "clothed upon" with a house, a lasting abode (2 *Cor.* v.). Our hope is more than that we shall live on, and that parting from the body we wear now shall not make us cease to be. That is much: but it is not all of which God tells us. Who does not know the grief of watching the slow, sure work of disease, and tracing the course by which the fastenings of life are loosened? Who does not prize the thought that where the soul has living union with God, "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day?" The soul may have ever a firmer hold upon God, and grow stronger in

its fresh life, even while the body breaks down and falls to ruin and decay. But we hope for more than merely to survive death. We hope like Christ to pass to Paradise, and like Him to go on to our resurrection. When we lay down this body of humiliation, fitted for our lowly life here, and reminding us ever of our humbled state, we look for the Lord Jesus Christ who will give us a body like to the body of His glory, and fitted for the new life with Him to which He will call us.

We shall be changed, and yet we shall know ourselves and shall be known. We change, day by day, while we live here. There is a ceaseless work of decay and renewal going on in our bodies, yet still the old features and marks remain; and each of us can say, as we look back through a long course of years, "It is I myself." So shall we feel, as from the other world we trace our life here. We shall recognise ourselves; our bodies shall be made up of what that world supplies, drawn together by the living power of our spirits, as God has willed; just as our bodies now are formed and built up from the materials of the world around us. They shall be glorious compared with those we have now, as the ripe corn plant surpasses the humble seed from which it springs. But we shall not be stangers to ourselves or to those who have known us in our time of trial.

We are taught of a spiritual resurrection, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. The old evil nature dies, perishes till it is gone. A new nature takes its place. God sees what we cannot see, a change in the whole inward spiritual being. We are called to take care that this change does indeed go on till it is finished in us. Christ was growing to His spiritual perfection, becoming day by day glorious in His Spirit—in His true self, even while His body wore out under its hard toil and suffering. He gave His disciples, on the Mount of Transfiguration, a glimpse of what God saw Him. After His resurrection, when He appeared on earth, that glory was still veiled. But St. John in his vision saw what the risen and glorified Son of Man has become. So may we grow like Him,

while we use His grace to purify ourselves even as He is pure. Our spirits may in God's sight take on them the glory and the beauty of His. The failing, sickly, dying body of the weakest and least honoured among men may be the veil of such glory as angels love to look upon. When the last remains of that form under which God has been working are stripped away, then in the Divine Presence, seeing Him as He is, the spirit shall take on it Christ's full likeness. Then there is the redemption of the body, the manifestation of the Son of God. The spirit shall be given a body which shall be for it a fitting partner in the glorified and endless life.

Because Christ lives we shall live also. From Him we gain that which changes and renews and builds up our spiritual being into the likeness of His own. Made members of Him, we have a part of His eternal life. His resurrection is the pledge that if we suffer with Him now, and are, like Him, obedient to God's will unto death, we shall appear with Him in glory, with body, soul, and spirit fit for the life of heaven.

"I look for the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Life of the World to come."

WHAT would our life be worth, if our life on earth were all? No man can get here what he longs for; all fail more or less to reach what they aim at. No path is bright long; no home is long glad; soon grief and loss come, and a place is sure to be soon left by one or another, who has to go away. No heart can have a rest that lasts. Care, sickness, pain, poverty, one or more of the many forms of trial, come sooner or later. Hopes die; friends are lost; strength wears out. What is there for man that he can know is real and will last? He must die; everything round him and in him tells him that, and makes it plainer day by day. Is there anything beyond? This life fails in all its promise. He learns its vanity better the longer he lives. Is this his only life?

Surely, we feel we are meant for something higher than we have. We are meant to be something nobler than we are. We know that it is an outrage and insult to ourselves to say, Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die. All our toil and woe and struggling have some end far on before us. We are born for more than what we see and have, and for greater work than that which we do day by day. We could only guess and hope this, if God had not spoken to us His own true word. What He tells us throws light on what seems so hard and dark; and now, by faith we can look beyond all here, and know whither we are going, and why our life now is what it is. We are dying, but we die to rise again. We must leave and lose this world, but there is a world to come. We die to gain a better life. We suffer now, that we may be made fit for rest and joy hereafter. The toil and woe and weakness under which we sink are all meant to make us ready for the life of the world towards which we are going.

"I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." What grand words these are! How strong the army of God should be, when each soldier can say this! What need daunt the Church, if all her members feel in their hearts this confidence? Life may wear away under sickness or care; foes may threaten, and death may seem always near; but the Christian has that which can keep his heart quiet. He looks for the resurrection of the dead. He hopes to hear the voice of a Saviour calling him to rise. He hopes to put off the weakened and lowly body, and be made glorious—as Jesus is.

The world may mock and persecute. He may find no home here, no peace, no quiet; but he looks for the life of the world to come, and nothing moves him from his straight path of patience and of work. There may seem to be nothing worth living for, but he knows there is, because the grave is not his goal. If all here fails and disappoints, yet *there* are those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Upon these he fixes his heart. Towards these he presses forward. And who that indeed

has this faith in his future can be idle, can be careless, can go on content in sin? Surely we, who look for such things, must be in earnest. We must feel how noble we are indeed, though now we seem so low and weak. We must be roused to try to live as those should live who have a part in eternity, and for whom the world to come is being prepared.

God has made us his sons; He has given us an undying life, joining us to His own divine nature in Jesus Christ. How can we risk the loss of all by living like the beasts that perish? How can we, born for eternity, forget all but time? How can we, heirs of heaven, spend our love on earth? Woe, and loss, and care, and death, may come; nothing need daunt us. We "seek a country," whither, if we love God and are in union with Christ, all things help to bring us. We are only pilgrims here. We need not fear to die—to launch away from the shore and take our last farewell of the world; for we look for the "Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the world to come."

EASTER.

EASTER used to be called the Queen of Feasts. And no feast is more bright or glorious. We are very glad at Christmas, but we cannot be free from sad thoughts then. We look on to all the pain and woe the child Jesus is born to bear. A hard life and a death of shame are before that Holy Babe that lies in the manger. While we sing our hymns of joy the dark shadow of the Cross falls on us. We are almost ready to ask how we can bear to be so happy. But at Easter there are no thoughts like these. The toil and shame and death are past. We have gone with Jesus in the way of the Cross till the end. We have seen Him laid in the quiet tomb. Now, while we look back on all that, angels tell us good news that He is risen from the dead. This is indeed good news. It almost seems too

good to be true. But it is true. Jesus lives. He shall not suffer or die any more. He has triumphed over death and the grave. He is free from them for ever. The work he came on earth to do is all done. Soon He will go to heaven to make ready a place for those who love Him while they are on earth, and to send down His good gifts to bless them. Easter is indeed a time to be very glad. How comforting to know that all the sorrows of Jesus are over! How sweet to be sure that He lives, and lives for us! All He did and bore was for our sake, and now His reward is our own. We need not fear to die, for death has lost its sting. Jesus is alive from the dead, and has put sin away. We need not shrink from the dark grave; for Jesus has risen, and, through Him, we shall rise too. Death is no more the king of terrors. He is a slave who takes off our working clothes when the evening of our toiling, painful life is come. We shall not stay for ever in the grave. We only lay our bodies down there for a little time to rest, that they may rise with a new, fresh life when the eternal morning breaks. Angels watch beside our graves, as they guarded the tomb of Jesus. Through the gate of death our souls pass like His to a happy meeting with friends dear to us before. The valley that leads down to it looks dark, but Jesus has passed through it. He will guide us by the hand, and cheer us with His words of comfort all the way.

Yes, Easter is a happy time; full of bright hopes and strength are the thoughts it brings. But are we sure that we have any part in its joy? Have we asked ourselves how far we have any right to join with angels and the Church on earth in singing Easter anthems? It may be that it would be as well for us had Jesus never died. It may be that we ought to mourn that He is risen, and that there is any life beyond the grave. There were some who knew that He had risen, who had seen the angel roll the stone away, yet they had no right to be glad. The soldiers and the unbelieving Jews were only under the more heavy wrath of God. They had slain Jesus: His rising proved who it was that had been slain, and yet they

would not grieve for what was done, and own Him as their Saviour. We may be like these. Jesus may have risen from the dead to be our judge, to give us up, at the last day, to a death from which there is no rising. We may sink down into a grave where we shall corrupt for ever.

We have a right to Easter joy only if we have kept Lent with those who love their Lord. If we have tried to share the sorrows of Jesus and bear our Cross after Him—if we have mourned for the sin that made Him die—then we may well be glad that He is risen. We have good cause to rejoice that we shall live for ever, if we are trying to die to sin and to live a new life of holiness. Oh! that all for whom He died—whom He had in His heart on the Cross—would indeed let His love draw them to Him. Oh! that all would leave their sins in His grave, and be with Him in His risen life, looking forward to heaven, waiting in the few days of life here, till they are taken up to be in joy for ever.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

AS Christ died and rose again, so we are called to die unto sin and to rise to newness of life. What Christ did gives us power to do this. The words mean a great deal. They set before us how thorough God's plan is, and our work ought to be. A man is not dead when he is sick, and ceases to take a very active part in the world's business and pleasure. He is dead when he has for ever left the world behind, when he is for ever deaf to its sounds, blind to its charms, and free from its cares. So we are not dead to sin when we begin to enjoy it less, and give ourselves less freely to it. We are dead to sin when we are done with it, when we shut off all that might draw us to it, and no opening is left by which it can find a way into our souls. A man has not entered on the world beyond the grave when

he has turned his thoughts towards it, but when he has entered on it, and made his abode there. So we do not rise to the new life when we correct a few faults or change our ways somewhat for the better, but when by faith we live in a world hallowed by God's presence, and are inspired in all we do by the grace that comes from Him.

We do not become wholly dead to sin at once: but we can honestly aim to be so. We can be alive unto God through Jesus living in us, and can give up ourselves and all we are to be ruled by Him. The death to sin may cost us much, and be hard to persevere in to the end. St. Paul speaks of "crucifying the flesh," that is, the old evil nature. Death on the cross is slow and painful. Christ held Himself fast to the nails till He could say, "It is finished," and could give His spirit, perfected by sufferings, into His Father's hands. So He, in us, will enable us to be firm, while sin is by slow and painful means weakened and killed, till we are ready to be set free to live perfectly to God in a peaceful, untempted life.

It was not enough for Christ to die: He rose again for our justification. We do not think only of dying away from this life's cares; we hope for a new life of peace and joy. So it is not enough to cease to do evil and to be evil. We are called to learn to do good from the Good Master, and to gain from Him what will make us good as He is good.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH US TO REPENTANCE.

WHAT wrong thoughts people have of God! How few, indeed, believe that God is love. He is little known as a Father, who tries to make us happy and lead us in the right way, drawing us on by kindness. Men, for the most part, look upon Him as if He was one only to be feared, from whose wrath we must be saved. Men speak of making peace with God, as if He were an enemy whom it is hard

to reconcile, instead of a Father who is ever waiting to be gracious. When any sorrow comes upon a family, at once it is said to be God's doing, and an effort is made to say, Thy will be done. God's voice is heard in warning, and the mourners are ready to own that there is some wise end in it all. In the sorrow they see what tells them of sin, what points to the last woe to which sin leads. They are nearly always brought humbly to God's feet; and though the feeling may not last, they seek the comfort and the hope which He alone can give.

They are right in this. No sorrow or pain comes without God's permission. In each most trifling care there is a warning. And very often God brings man low that he may learn where the only true strength is. He takes earthly wealth or friends away, that the heart may rise towards things above. He leaves us without human comforters, that we may long for One who is Divine.

Men are right in hearing God speak when He afflicts; but they are wrong in being deaf or heedless, as they are, to the voice of God, that is calling to them in tones of love. It is not only, or chiefly, by sorrows that God speaks to us. He speaks far more through the many gifts and tokens of His goodness. If we try to count up the comforts and the blessings and hopes we have, we will find that they far outnumber our griefs. Even though our lot be a very sad one, how much of joy there is within our reach! In how many ways do we share God's bounty! Life, health, friends, memories of happy days, hopes of bright days yet to come, all that cheers our path, where do these come from? Every good thing is from above. Through each God calls to us and reminds us of our Father. The goodness of God leads us to repentance, for it tells of the love that we sin against. It warns of the ingratitude of sin. It bids us think of the great wealth of love which we turn from, and risk the loss of, when we sin. It encourages us to be sure of the grace, and pardon, and happiness that may be ours for ever if we only will. Yes, the little comforts, the daily pleasures, the bright hopes which come to us, are all meant to lead our hearts to God and fasten

them closely to Him. They ought to have more power than the trials that we are so ready to say at once are sent by God. They are more the natural voice of Him who loveth mercy, and whose strange work is judgment. Men may be hard still, though all the terrors of the law are plain before them. No heart can be unsoftened that has learned the goodness of God in the love that pleaded from the Cross.

THE ASCENDED SAVIOUR.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

IT was hard for the disciples to believe it well for them that their Lord should go away. How could it be well for them to be left by Him for whom they had left all,—to lose their one friend and guide and help and teacher? When He went away to death, all hope seemed gone. When He rose again, their one great thought must have been, at first, that He was come to go away no more. But He taught them truer views in those forty days. They learned to know Him and His work, and the way in which He was to be most really and preciously with them. So, when He rose from earth, and they saw Him pass behind the cloud that waited for Him, there was no misgiving in their hearts. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They knew that He was not lost to them, but only had gone to come down ever in a true and blessed way, and be with them always and everywhere. They knew that He was gone to prepare a place for them, whither He would lead them safely step by step.

That last glimpse which the disciples had of Him as He rose from Mount Olivet tells us how He would have the Church think of Him now. He "lifted up His hands and blessed them," and thus He parted from them. And now we think of Him pouring down blessings, and giving us the rich gifts He has won for men.

He is on high our High Priest, pleading for us, showing before God His work and sacrifice, staying the doom we deserve, making our day of grace longer, winning our pardon, giving the Holy Spirit, and all helps that all souls need on earth. He is the Man in the highest place of heaven. And in Him those who are joined to Him are raised above this poor world, and have a part in His glory. In heart and mind we can rise to where He is. We can be with Him in love and thought, and dwell in heaven. We can feel and know that we "are come" unto Jesus, and that in Him we are lifted in very deed and truth to the home and rest on high.

> There for sinners Thou art pleading,
> There Thou dost our place prepare;
> Ever for us interceding
> Till in glory we appear.

We do not need to ask where is Christ, and follow one who must move from place to place on earth as we do. We do not need to leave our daily duties to seek a Presence, now here now there, and press through crowds in weary, careful excitement. Christ is in heaven. And He is, by the power of His glorified spiritual nature, wherever His Church is. In our quiet homes, in the bustle of work, in the crowd of streets, in the calm of lonely places, where we wander far from noise of men, Christ is the always near friend and helper of all. To Him we can, at any time, and in any place, breathe out our hearts' cares and wants. In Him we never fail to find a sure comforter. And where two or three meet in His Name, there the unseen Saviour may be felt by faithful ones, making His Presence known. He comes to welcome each new child brought to God, and to give it of His own life. He comes to feed weary and hungering souls with His own Body and Blood. He comes to make all that is done in His Name full of His living power, mighty in blessing for man, and of worth in the sight of heaven. All this is the fruit of the Ascension. The Church will not know the glory that is hers from the going away of her Lord, until He comes again, not to be with her on earth, but to bring her to be with Him in heaven.

WHITSUNTIDE.

THE Jews kept the feast of the Passover in remembrance of God's mercy in saving them out of Egypt. Fifty days after, they kept the feast of Pentecost, in remembrance of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. We keep Easter, glad and thankful that we are saved from worse bondage than that borne by God's people of old. When fifty days have passed, new thoughts of joy inspire our praises. We keep Whitsuntide as the feast of the Holy Ghost; we think of Him coming to make known the truth and will of God in a new way, and to write His law on the hearts of men.

When Christ rose to heaven, He left His disciples not mourners, but full of glad, brave hope. They waited for a gift of which they were sure. He had told them that it was good for them that He should go; for His going would help them more than His staying. They knew that He had gone to send them One who would guide them into all truth, and give them power, and be their Comforter for ever. They waited in prayer and faith and obedience. After not many days the promise came. Outward signs told of the unseen One. A sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and tongues as of fire, witnessed the reality of the Divine coming. And they felt the strong force, the warming, enlightening glow within them. They knew that the promise of the Father, the power from on high, was theirs. God was, of a truth, with them and in them. And that coming was not for them alone. He came, who was to abide for ever. The promise was to them, and to those who from afar off in time and place should be called into the Church of God.

The Holy Ghost did not begin at Pentecost His work on earth. He moved on the face of the deep, bringing creation into form and order. He strove with man when he wilfully left the straight paths. He spoke through the prophets. He moved the holy men who wrote and taught the truths of God. He guided the faith and worship of the

Jewish Church. He made known the hope of the better days to be. By Him the Word took flesh. His light and power were poured out with no stint upon the human soul of Christ. His influence was breathed on the apostles when they were sent to speak and work in God's name. At Pentecost He came to be with and in men in a new way. His coming answered to that of God the Son, when He came down to join Himself to men and dwell among them.

The Holy Ghost did not come to take the place of Christ, to be instead of One no more with men. Christ did not only say, "I will send the Comforter;" He also said, "I will come unto you,"—"I go away and come again,"—"I am with you always." And He said, "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice, because I go unto the Father." Plainly these words meant that by His going away they should not only have joy in the thought of His joy, but that their love should have fuller delight in His nearness. This was to be brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit. Another way of being with them, more blessed than the old way, was to follow His going up on high. The Holy Ghost was not to fill the place of One absent from them. He was to make Christ with them, and enable them to know His presence.

As by the power of the Holy Ghost the natural body of Christ was formed, so He builds up the mystical Body which the Church of Christ is. By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body. He joins us to Christ, and makes us living members of Him, branches of the one true Vine. By His patient, untiring energy the life that is Christ's keeps us living branches, in union with Christ and with one another.

The Holy Spirit led the Church into all truth. He lit up the pages of the old Scriptures. He taught the minds and kindled the hearts of those who had seen and heard Christ's words. He made them able to guide the infant Church. And when the right time came, He moved chosen and prepared men to write, for the after ages, what was best, in the most helpful way. And now He is with those who teach and with those who learn, showing the meaning

and making the force be felt of what He inspired. So He is the Spirit of Truth. But He is the Spirit of Grace too. Means of grace have power from Him. He makes the Sacraments more than outward forms. He makes them ways by which God's love passes—able to give or to renew and strengthen in the soul union with Christ. He gives the spirit which is able to realise the adoption, and express it in the cry to God, "Abba, Father." He prays in the soul that knows not what to pray for aright. He warns of sin, and pleads as God's advocate with man. He prompts good desires, and works with those who are willing to do the will of God.

The end of His presence is to make the Church holy, and to make each member of Christ's Body holy. Where He is not grieved, or resisted, or quenched, His Divine work of love goes on. He restores, builds up, confirms, purifies. Faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and goodness are ours through Him.

It is better that the Holy Spirit is with us, than that Christ should have stayed on earth in the old way. We have not now to seek for Christ—to go long distances, or to send for Him in our day of need. When we leave this world, we have not to leave Christ. By the Holy Spirit's power Christ is wherever His members are. He is within call of everyone; by each bedside of the sick, where each penitent or sad one kneels. And when we go from earth, we go from seeing Him by faith to seeing Him as He is, where in His glory He pleads, and prepares a place for us.

I WILL COME UNTO YOU.

BY the power of the Holy Ghost the Son of God took flesh, and was made man. When the Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, He did not come to take Christ's place on earth, but to make Him present in a

new way, and to build up His mystical Body, the Church. Christ had disciples and followers who believed Him, and loved Him, but He had not, before the Spirit came, "members" united to Himself, parts of His very being. This is the great blessing we enjoy. This lays on us our great responsibility. Christ is present, as He said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you;" "Lo, I am with you all the days." We know it true that it was "expedient for us that He should go away." Because we love Him and love to be united to Him, we rejoice because of His going to the Father. We know that we have Him as our Saviour in a more blessed way than was given to those who were the Man of Sorrows' closest friends. "Baptized into Christ" by the power of the Spirit, we "put on Christ," we share His very life. We can "dwell in Him, and He in us." We are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones;" we are one with all those who are in Him, whether in the Church on earth or the Church at rest.

So the power of Christ is ours, that we may live Christ-like lives. There is no height of holiness which we may not reach; there is no strength of patience and gentleness and love which we cannot show, through Him in whom we live, and who lives in us, enabling us to do all things.

So also our guilt is great if we make the Divine life in us be vain, or if we drive away the presence of our Lord. Sin takes a new dreadfulness when we look at it as done by those who are "an habitation of God through the Spirit," to whom it can be said, "know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates." We rejoice in the truths of which Whit-Sunday tells, but we must rejoice with trembling. We can put forth, if we will, the very power of the Almighty in our strife with sin and our efforts after holiness. But, "how can we escape if we neglect so great salvation," or use the members of Christ in that sin, to deliver us from which He died for us and lives in us?

ANOTHER COMFORTER.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."—*Eph.* iv. 30.
"Quench not the Spirit."—1 *Thess.* v. 19.

"GRIEVE the Holy Spirit"—how can we do that? Does anything that we do really make God sorry, and give His love pain? So we are clearly taught. God loves us, and tries to lead us in the way which will bring us to our true joy in Him, and give Him joy in us. The Holy Spirit has come, and He dwells in every one of us—a friend, a helper, a guide—warning, cheering, comforting, blessing in more ways than we can know of. He makes our bodies, and all we are, His temple in which He lives. As Jesus, when on earth, grieved over man's hardness of heart and cold unbelief and love of sin, so the Holy Spirit feels when we resist Him and will not let Him bless us as He would. He stirs us up to pray, and we refuse to ask for what He teaches us to feel the want of. He puts into our hearts good desires; but we will go no farther, and they die in us, having led to nothing. He gives us strength to please God; we use the strength in other ways, and the work of God is left undone. He warns us against temptation; but we go into it and fall. He shows us the beauty of holiness; but we do not try to gain it. He lifts our thoughts toward heaven and its bright glories; but we turn away to earth, which we love better. He tells of the love of God, of the work of the Saviour to bring the Divine love near us; but we care little for it all, and shut up our hearts fast against our Father. He holds up before us the dread doom of sin, and the end of a life's shame; but we will not fear the loss of God; we will not see the horror of the home of the lost; we will not be made ashamed of our sin stains and of our bad ingratitude. He claims us as His own, and bids us trust Him to change us day by day, and make us more and more pure and happy; but we bring in to live in our hearts with Him evil thoughts and low feelings; we let Satan come

near us and the world defile us. If we do not plainly bid Him leave us, we only give Him a place with sin, we ask Him to live in us and share a home with what He hates as God's foe and ours. Did the Holy Spirit not love us, then He would be only angry, and would go away in wrath. But He yearns to save us from what our own madness would lead us to. He clings to us, though He is grieved. Not till all hope is gone, till men are so full of sin that there is no room for Him, does He depart, leaving them in darkness and the soul's death, with the light of God quenched and the life of God departed.

TRUSTING AND DOING.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good."—*Psalm* xxxvii. 3.

SO the Psalmist advises us: Do good, looking to the Lord in faith for His help and blessing. We can do no good without God; all power we have is from Him. We own this when we are asked about it, but do we indeed act as if we felt it true? Do we watch for opportunities and do good with the lowly care, and yet with the glad sense of power, which are right in those whom God makes strong?

Some try to do good, but there is no abiding feeling of dependence. They do not seek enough to have their store of grace renewed. They are not as careful as they ought to keep up a living union with the source of grace by all the means provided. So they often fail. They do evil, while they wish to do good. They lose trust in the Lord, when in truth they have only ground for feeling how weak they are without Him, and how they need more faith.

Others "Trust in the Lord," and do *nothing*. They look to Him, not to help them to do good, but to save them all care and trouble, and relieve them from all claims of duty. They trust in the Lord's hard work, and are ready to give Him all the glory, if He will spare them

all exertion. They know they can do no good by themselves. They think to honour God by believing that they can do no good with His Divine aid. So they fold their hands in pious idleness, and "trust in the Lord."

Others again "trust in the Lord" and do *evil*. They love the world and live for it. They enjoy sin, and spend their strength in serving it. They do not love God, or care for His grace. They have no wish to be taken away from the only things that they have any heart or relish for. But they "trust in the Lord" that when they can no longer be happy or safe without Him, He will come near, bringing pardon and all they need. Thus countless souls deceive themselves. They trust in their own vain dream of what they would like God to be; when it is too late they find out what He is.

Only those who trust in the Lord to enable them to do good shall be made good. Only those who "by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality," have any right to trust in Him for "eternal life."

WHAT IS RIPENING?

HOW pleasant are the bright green fields on which the summer sun shines down! Countless plants are rising up slowly and surely, as God's hand forms them out of what the soil and the air and the dew and the rain supply. The sun's light and warmth cherish the beauty and the life of each. Day by day the promise of the Autumn harvest is more plain, and man can learn new lessons of the goodness and wisdom and truth of God. The farmer, as he looks over his fields, knows what to expect in each. He has sown wheat in part of his land, and he is sure that there oats or barley will not grow. He does not need to ask what is springing up in one field or another: it is enough to look back to the seed-time,

and he has no doubt what he can look forward to reaping at harvest-time.

There is another harvest coming with which we all shall have to do. What are we to reap when the end of the world comes? We can know, and we ought to know, just as the farmer can tell us what sort of grain his land will bear. From what he has sown he knows what he shall reap. So may we. Day by day and hour by hour the slow work of ripening goes on. Angels see it, and the evil ones who hate us see it too. Are we, who are above all interested, content to be careless? If we have sown to the Spirit, and sown plenteously, what hope, what joy to think of the good harvest coming! How blessed to watch and labour, lest the growth unto perfection be hindered. If we have sown to the flesh, if only the thorns and briers of sin fill up God's ground, if that ground has been left uncared for, is it not well to know the truth before the "harvest be past, the summer ended, and we not saved?" That evil sowing may yet be rooted out. The good seed of God is still offered, His grace is still ready to make our natures fruitful, to His glory and our eternal wealth.

SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOUR.

MOST people know the fourth commandment, and most people pay some heed to it. There are few who do not rest from work for one day out of seven. All who pretend to have any religion try to keep that day holy, and spend it as those ought who must live for ever. But there are some words in that fourth commandment which are too often passed by, as if they were not part of God's law at all. And yet they are there, as plain in their meaning and as strong as any others. They are these, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do." God does not say, "Six days thou mayest labour,

and if thou hast anything to do, put it by before the seventh comes;" but He says, "Six days *shalt* thou labour and do all that thou hast to do." We are as much bound to work for six days as we are to rest on one day. We must not think we obey this law when we keep the half which bids us rest, while we break the half which bids us work. The whole of it is given to us as a rule of life. If we neglect either part of it we disobey God. The hard-working man, who spends Sunday like other days, is as bad as the man who rests and goes to Church on Sunday and idles all the week. But he is not worse. Each man chooses half the commandment and keeps it. Each chooses the other half and neglects that. Both are wrong. For this world and the next they are wrong.

He who makes seven working days instead of six will find that he is no gainer by acting as if he were wiser than the God who made him. He will do less work in the long run, and he will not do it so well. And he does not act rightly by that part of him which makes him a man. He lives as if he had only this world to do with, and no endless life hereafter. He lays up all his treasure on earth. He does not use the means God gives him to train his soul for life with God, and to grow fit for heaven. He lives as if he were only made to toil for daily bread, and had no soul to care for.

But the man who is careful on Sunday and idle all the week has no right to blame him. He is to be blamed himself, and breaks the fourth commandment quite as really as the other. "Six days shalt thou labour" is a clear law, and it binds everyone. We all have work to do of some kind, with hands, or head, or both. Body and mind have their part in making us useful in our place in life. Idleness nearly always brings its punishment in this world. God has so arranged it. We are made to work, and, if we do not, we go wrong, like a machine that is left to rust. The mind and body get weak if they have nothing to bring out their powers. The active life is the only healthy one. And it is the

only happy one. Most men find that loss of money, loss of friends, loss of peace, loss of all that makes up worldly comfort is the end of idleness. But more, work is a duty. It is part of religion. The honest, diligent doing of the every-day task, common though it be, is duty to God. If done in God's sight, and as a duty to Him, it will be blessed. It is part of the training of man for eternity, just as really as the holy services and the calm of the Lord's day.

And we must not only do something, but "all that we have to do." This is the commandment. We must not leave undone or half do what God puts before us, but do it with our might. The rest of the labouring man is sweet. Sunday brings true refreshment to him who has borne his part well in the work of the week, and who goes with Christ away from the world to rest awhile, and gain new strength and courage for another six days' toil.

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT?

WE are very dear to God. God made us in love. The God with whom we have to do is still and is always the same—Love. God has paid a great price, even the life of His Own only Son, to save us. A father can know something of what God teaches us it cost Him to help us and make us His Own when we were lost. We are careful to keep safely what we have done or paid much to gain. So God is not willing to lose one of those for whom His Own Son died. He looks on us as part of His wealth, as His Own sheep, as born to be His much loved children. He wants us to be free from sin, out of the power of Satan. Evil is the foe against which He wants to help us. He wants to have us safe in His holy home on high. So every one who longs to shake loose from evil and become pure, may be glad as soon as the weakest wish, if it be true, rises in his heart. For he may be sure

that God has given it, and that, however he may wish for holiness, God's wish for the same end is far stronger. When one sinner repents, angels are filled with joy. God's arms of love are stretched out to draw towards Him the least who feels an honest shame and sorrow for his sin, and who arises to go to his Father.

But we must keep in mind that God has sent His Son to save us from *sin*, and that now it is for those who long to fly from *sin* that He has mercy ready. It is no part of the work of Christ to save the sinner from "the fruit of his own ways" while the heart feels no hate of sin. It is no part of the Spirit's work to make men dread pain and loss and endless burning of soul, but to make them feel the shame of sin and the beauty of holiness. Often indeed men are first taught, like the prodigal, to feel the ruin which a life away from God brings, and to dread the doom coming on the wicked. This shows them what an evil sin is, and they are led on to hate it. But it would be no mercy to save a man from punishment in this world, and so let him forget his sin. And it would be no mercy to let a man into heaven while his heart was Satan's. God promises to heal all those who wish to be saved from *sin*. He wishes to save them far more than they wish to be saved. But He nowhere promises to hear those who only pray for pardon, and who would sin on if they dared. To fear hell is not penitence. Christ's work is not to give safety in sin, but freedom from sin. He is the Saviour of sinners, but only of those who wish to be sinners no more.

PRAYERLESS.

YOU are living without prayer. You never speak to God. Day after day goes by, and no word of praise goes up to heaven from your heart. You do not feel any want in your soul; you do not care for what would help

and strengthen it. The body, your life of every day, your work and wages, your clothes and food are what you think about. You don't think God has anything to do with these, and so you are prayerless.

Prayerless! What does that mean? It means this: God made you. You are His, not your own. The limbs you walk with, the brain you think with, every power you have and use in getting your living and enjoying life belongs to Him. He put breath into that body of clay in which your soul dwells; and, at any hour, He could stop the machine which He has made and keeps going, and could leave it to fall in pieces. All this, you know, is true; and yet you are not afraid to go on as if there were no God to whom you owed anything. You take His good gifts; you turn His mercies to use; but you never thank Him; you never pray to Him to give you His blessings still, and teach you how to use them as you ought and enjoy them fully.

But, again: you are a sinner. God knows it. God sees you always, and not one evil thought is in your mind that you can hide from Him. There is a great load of sin on your soul that has been getting bigger every day. You are coming always nearer the time when the last sin will have been done by you on earth, and God will spread all your life before you. Any one sin clung to is enough to drive you to the place where there is no hope. You have heard of all this, and you have heard of all that God has done. You know what the Cross means. You know how Jesus lived a sad life and died a dreadful death, and that you were in His heart all the time, and that His Blood cleanseth from all sin now. But you don't care about all this. You are not afraid of sin. You are not ashamed of having made your Saviour die. You will not take the trouble to tell Him of the great debt you owe, and to ask Him to wipe it out. You know you may die any hour, and that you are hopeless if you die without having found God a friend. But you go on and live a stranger to Him.

Again: you are in a world where Satan tries to get

you more and more in his power, to make you worse, to lead you from all that is good, and sink you down lower in sin. You go out to meet temptations, and never ask for the only strength that can make you safe from him who hates your soul. So he can do as he likes with you. He has only a weak man to lead away. You might meet him with the strength of God, but you are alone, because you are prayerless.

Once more: day by day cares and troubles come upon you. You try to bear up, but they crush you. You try to escape, but they follow. Your hopes fail, and the world grows dark. You lose, one by one, the things you prize, and soon, you fear, you shall have lost all. You are sad, and sometimes almost hopeless. Friends try to cheer you, but it is not much that they can do. So the load of trouble is heavy still, and your life is no brighter. God alone can give you the rest, the comfort you want. He is waiting near, ready to be your friend. He bids you cast your care on Him, and tells you of joy, and peace, and hope, which He longs to give. But there might as well be no loving, helping Father in heaven, for your eyes and heart are turned away—you are prayerless.

WHAT WILT THOU?

A BLIND man cried to Jesus Christ for "mercy." The Lord called him to come near, and said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He seems to have wished to fix the man's faith more directly on Him, and to make what was, perhaps, hardly more than the expression of his misery, a prayer for a special gift to be given in answer to it. The question, most likely, first awoke in the man a hope of receiving his sight, and gave him faith in Christ as one able to give it. When the desire was spoken in plain words, at the feet of the Saviour, it was granted.

There is much crying for mercy, for pardon, for grace, for salvation, which leads to nothing. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, and no virtue goes from Him to heal the sin and sorrow around His path. Men think that He does not feel for them, and that it is vain to pray. Where is the fault? Do not the words spoken to the blind man by the people and by Christ help us to know? They said to him, "Rise, He calleth thee." Jesus said to him, "What wilt thou?"

Men cry to the Saviour from far off. They stay in their sloth or sin, asking Him to send them help, as they are and where they are. They do not hear or obey His call to come near to Him that He may give them from Himself all that He knows they need. They are willing that He should "pass by," and pass out of their sight, if He will only fling them alms. They forget that although they may have no desire beyond the temporal good of which they feel the want, Christ is not satisfied unless He can find a welcome for the gifts that are indeed of highest worth.

Much prayer is vague and without fixed purpose. It aims at no end, and so it leads to nothing. It is more like the cry of some unreasoning animal than the petition of a thinking human being. We often indeed know not what to pray for, and we must put ourselves before God in quiet faith, asking Him to give what He sees best, and to do with us as He wills, in His own wise love. And even when our prayers are most thoughtful, there is always much that for our ignorance we cannot ask. But, if we are to pray aright, we must speak plainly to God what is in our hearts and minds, letting our requests be made known, and looking for the promised help to come. Before we speak to God we should try to know how we stand before Him, and what our needs are. We should speak to God as if we saw Him, and as plainly as if He would not know our wants except He heard them from us. So we shall have more feeling of the reality of what we do, more meaning and aim; we shall be more roused to faith and hope. We shall be ready to receive

and to use for God's glory the gifts that come in answer to our prayers.

We pray for mercy: what mercy? In what way do we ask that mercy may be shown to us? What sorrow pleads for Divine compassion? What unworthiness warns us that we can only hope to be heard through the loving mercy of Him to whom we pray? We beg for pardon: surely such a prayer ought not to be wanting in clearness. True, there are secret faults which our closest searching may not find out, but which are plain and dark to God's eye. Yet, when we ask our judge to pardon us, we surely are bound to look carefully at our lives and souls, and to lay before Him the sins, from the guilt of which we need to be delivered. If we do not take the pains to do this, how can we hope that we have any true sense of sin's danger, or any true longing to be forgiven.

We ask for grace: there are many kinds of grace given for special cases and special needs. Have we tried to learn wherein we fail, and for what we seek help? While we pray, are we in earnest in using the means by which grace is given, and watchful to put forth the power of the grace that comes to us? We ask for salvation: What meaning has salvation to our minds? Do we desire to be saved now from all that is against God's will, and so against our own good? Are we ready to do all to work out to the end that salvation for which we ask God our Saviour to be in us the will and the power?

Alas! prayers, public and private, sacraments and means of grace, are much in vain, because there is no active rising up to come to God through Christ, and no clear answer ready to the question "What wilt thou?"

Each prayer should be part of the life's effort to know and serve God better in some one or more special ways. In each Communion there should be a special pleading of Christ's merits in order to gain some needed mercy: And Christ should be implored to enter anew into the nature as a power to overcome some strong evil, or to impart some virtue that is lacking.

HOW TO USE THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"WE know not what to pray for as we ought." The right things to pray for and the right words to use are a great care to many true-hearted people. They use forms of prayer, but often find them only poor help; for they do not suit their case, they are not quite what they want to say to God. They try to pray simply, like a child speaking to his father; but words fail, and they doubt whether they are doing right, and words are so slow in coming as to seem to check the heart's desires. Forms of prayer are a great help; they remind us of what we should pray for, and they give us words in which to speak, so that we are able to keep heart and mind more free and calm to look to God in true devotion. But they must not be used as forms, and said because they are in a book, or we have learned them. They must be made our own, must be put both into our heads and hearts. We must say them to God from our head and heart, not out of a book, or like a parrot, from memory. If we use forms in our prayers, we should go over the words and make them our own before we say them to God. No forms, however good, will be enough for a soul that knows God's nearness, and wishes to hold close communion with Him. We should get more and more into the way of speaking out to God all that is in our hearts at all times. While at work, or mixing in the world, we should gain the habit of living in the felt presence of One whose ear is always ready, to whom we can tell everything, and on whom we can at once lay each care as it comes. The more we try to do this the more we shall be able to do it, and the more strengthened and comforted we shall be.

Christ has given us a prayer. At one time He said, "When ye pray say," as if the Lord's Prayer was to be always used to make up for the failures in our own devotions. At another time He said, "After this manner pray

ye," as if the Lord's Prayer was to guide us in our words to God. It is a very good plan to use it in both these ways. It will guide and help us, so as to overcome most of the difficulties that hinder and spoil our prayers. Let me show how.

The Lord's Prayer is not one prayer, but a great many. In it we are taught to ask for all we need, and to say what is right in the best way. We are sure of this; for Christ, through whom our prayers reach the Father, has given it to us. But He means it to guide us in bringing other words to God. We may say it as we do in church without stopping: but when we pray alone, it is most good to use it as a number of heads of prayer, pausing after each part, and making it real to our own case, speaking what it brings to our thoughts.

Say, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Then stop, and think of the words. In them you call on God to listen to you; you own Him as your Father, and the Father of others, the great God on High. Look up to Him thus, and rouse your love, and trust, and reverence. Thank Him for the right to call Him by so dear a name, and for all the blessing that comes to you and others as the children of One so great, and holy, and good. Then go on, "Hallowed be Thy Name." Then stop again: think of the greatness of God, how He ought to be honoured, how you can bring glory to His name, and save it from being blasphemed. Pray for the heart to be jealous for Him. "Thy kingdom come." Stop again: ask yourself what in you is rebel still, pray for grace to yield, and to own Him King. Think how you may help to make wide God's rule in the world, or His triumph in the Church—how you may hasten Christ's coming, and make ready for it. Seek grace and power to do your part. "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Stop again: see in thought the great ones of heaven finding their joy in obeying God. Pray that you may be like them, seek grace to leave yourself in God's hands and quietly bear your trials; seek grace to do the duties that are before you. And so when you pray for "daily bread," tell God of each need of soul and body, lay

all at His feet, and leave your cares with Him. When you pray for "forgiveness" of your trespasses, call to mind any hard feelings you may have against any, and pray first that these may be forgiven and taken away: then tell all your sins, one by one, and ask pardon, and vow in God's strength to sin no more. When you pray against temptation, and to be delivered from evil, think of the temptations that you must use God's grace to flee from or to overcome, and of those which try you most. Go over them all in God's presence; put yourself under His protection, seek His help for each. Then, when you say "for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory," make the words a real act of praise, and faith, and thanksgiving. Let them indeed come from a heart full of joy that you have such a God to hear and help, who makes His power work for your good, and makes your good His glory. Those who try to use the Lord's Prayer in this way, will not find it hard to say to God all they want. The words of Christ's Prayer will help them to think of, and to pray for, what is right in a right way.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WORDS are often used to hide one's meaning from other people. They very often hide it from one's self. There are religious phrases which are easy to say and which sound well, but which mean nothing. They do not bear being put into plain words, such as are used in common every day life. They save the trouble of thinking, and they put off those who expect something to be said. They come from a lazy mind and a slow conscience: and they make the mind and conscience duller, as the habit grows of speaking without thought and feeling. People are often wholly blinded, and are able to go on in blindness as to their true state, by having the power of repeating what are called "cant" phrases. They can talk about God and the things of God, they can talk to God, in the

words of wise and holy men; so they take for granted that they know and feel a great deal. All the while, perhaps, their heads and hearts have nothing to do with what their lips say. It seems very good to themselves and those who hear them; but to God their souls are silent, and they speak only vain sounds which lull them into a deeper spiritual sleep.

Of course, the words we use when speaking of God's truth have nearly always meanings beyond what our thoughts soon reach, and which are shown to us as we are able to receive them. Our prayers, too, are meant to lift us up, and may tell of what we long and aim to feel, as well as what we do feel. But we should be quite sure that we mean something, and sure what we mean; the devotions we bring to God should be a real saying out of what is in the heart. God is in heaven, and we on earth; our words should be few and well chosen; we should be always on our guard lest we offer the sacrifice of fools. When we repeat religious expressions we should do so as thinking beings, not as parrots imitating sounds. When we pray, we should be sure what meaning the words we speak to God have when used by *us*.

Many people would be startled and roused to self-searching thought if they looked calmly at the solemn language that comes so easily from their lips, and put it in plain words before them. They would find how unreal much is, how far they come short of what in their words they own they ought to be. Many would learn much truth did they think over their stock of familiar religious phrases, and try to have a clear notion of what is meant.

MORNING PRAYER.

MOST people who pray at all, take care to pray at night. A great many people leave out their morning prayers, or else hurry or shorten them, so that they have more sin

in them than devotion. What is the meaning of this? It may be said that in the morning time is short. There are many things to be done and they must be put by in good time. Mothers have their children to dress and send to school. Fathers have to get to work at an early hour and perhaps far off from home. Boys and girls must be at school, and want to have some play, or do something to help at home before the bell rings. There is no good reason found out so far. The only thing these answers prove is that the people who give them do not put much value on their morning prayers. I would ask—is it worth while spending five or ten minutes with God before you start to meet the dangers and cares and temptations of the day? If you think it is, then you can find those minutes, if you like. Once or twice you may waken late, and have to do your best, finding it hard to pray with much peace or help; but anyone can get into a habit of being up early enough for his prayers. If you are late, simply because you lie in bed with your eyes open, you choose between the lazy pleasure of a little more rest, which does you no good, and the great blessing which God has ready to give you through your prayers. You choose to go out alone, without having put yourself under God's care, rather than make the one effort to leave your bed. If you do this, take care that it does not show something all wrong in your religion. Be sure whether it does or not; and if so, lose no time in mending.

But many people, specially the young, are careless about morning prayer, while they never dare go to bed without praying. They act thus under this mistake. They fancy that in some way they are safer in the daytime, but need God's care very much at night. When they get up, the day is before them, and there seems nothing to make them fear or think of another world than the one they see. In the evening they are going to put the candle out and lie down in the dark. All sorts of solemn thoughts come, and they feel their need of God, and would be afraid not to pray to Him.

Quite right about evening prayers! We ought not to

dare to lie down without having put ourselves into God's good keeping. We ought not to sleep till we have thought over His goodness through the day, and thanked Him, and told Him of our sins, and asked Him to lift them off our souls. Quite wrong about morning prayers! For, when indeed are we safest—by night or day? At night we are shut in. Few dangers can come near us. Unless the house falls, or is broken into, we are almost out of reach of harm, and our souls are not much in the way of temptation. The world is locked out. The devil can only speak to us in our dreams. The flesh is as if dead. And so we are, "very good when we are asleep." But in the day, all sorts of danger must be met. We may hurt ourselves; we may catch sickness. In countless ways harm may come. And our thoughts are busy, and Satan is on the watch to turn them in wrong paths. Eyes and ears are open for sin to get through them at our souls. The tongue is ready to say wrong; the hands and feet to do wrong. The day is our fighting time, when we need God in a multitude of ways, over and above the ways in which we want Him at night. Those who go out by themselves to meet all that is against them, when they might have God with them and feel that they had trusted themselves to His holy keeping, are surely very unwise or very careless.

ALWAYS NEAR.

NEGLECT of morning prayers is very common. Most people kneel down at night. Then the world's work is done; there is no press of other things; to say a prayer only costs the loss of a very little sleep. But, in the morning, sleep keeps a strong hold, and each minute before getting up is prized. At last, there is a rush to be in time for something that will not wait. Something must be left undone. The morning prayer seems as if it could be best spared. It is, with more or less thought, set aside, or it is

quite forgotten in the hurried rush. So the dangers and cares and work of the day are faced without any new drawing down of cheer and strength from God. No wonder so many fail and fall, and have to cry out for help in trouble out of which God would have kept them had He been asked.

Evening prayers do not make up for the neglect of morning prayers. Those who as a habit begin the day without prayer are hardly fit to pray at night, and can hope for little good from their devotions.

To look at it in another way. What would be thought of anyone who came down stairs and took his breakfast and went to his work or pleasure, with no greeting to the other members of the family, no word of kindness or of recognition? So what ought those to think of themselves who pass by the God who wants to be spoken to, and take no notice of His presence, or of the morning blessing that He waits to give; who use what He has provided for their comfort, and fail to thank Him or even to look towards Him?

Again, from morning to night is too long a time to let pass without holding any converse with God. Most people can find a time and way, if they wish to be alone with their Divine Father for a little while. Some live in a crowd all day long, and have scarce a pause in their toil. But God is never out of reach or hearing; He can catch the faintest whisper; He watches the mind that thinks towards Him, and the heart that turns to Him for help or sympathy or light or pardon, or that bows itself in loving praise. All can know that God is with them, and can keep their hold on His fatherly kindness, being as sure of Him as if they saw Him. So none need be ever alone, none need be parted from Christ by any crowd.

And God looks to be spoken to, He wishes to be thought of, kept in mind and trusted and called upon, by those whom He teaches to pray without ceasing. He is pained when He can win no notice from us and is the only friend we seem to pass by and forget. What would be thought of a man who all day long walked with one near in blood to

him and one whom he professed to hold dear, and spoke no word, and gave no sign that told of any knowledge of his presence?

God is with us always. He goes in and out wherever we go. He waits with all kindness ready. What does our silence of mind and heart mean to Him? Must it not try His patience sorely and grieve His love? How strange that the hand of God should be ready to grasp ours, and be as if it were not held out! How strange that the Divine ear should wait for what we may say to Him, and catch no word from our cold, unfeeling hearts and unbelieving minds!

LEARN TO PRAY.

ALL who are in earnest know how hard it is to pray. The careless and unloving can kneel down and go lightly through a form of words. The self-trustful and unfearing can utter with fluent ease what comes from neither mind nor heart. As men learn what they do when they call on God by name, and ask Him to look down and listen to them, they feel what prayer should be. They find out where they fail, and how sadly their most earnest devotion falls short. Those who long most to be free-minded and whole-hearted often mourn the most over failure. They rise from their knees full of shame for wandering thoughts and cold desires. They are almost tempted to doubt how far they can be true, while their prayers seem so unreal.

This ought to make men humble and watchful. But those whom it makes so need not be discouraged. God is still true, who promises to help prayer and to hear it: they may be quite true; and indeed their feeling of shortcoming is a proof of their honest purpose. This want of power to free the mind and heart and will in prayer, tells perhaps of the habits of old careless days which cannot be

got rid of easily. As in everything else, so in prayer, sin of past days makes right-doing harder. More care and effort must be used; but those who suffer for their own fault need not wonder, and have no right to complain.

The tempter, also, is sure to come against the strong, when they seek to be made stronger. Of course he tries to make prayers vain, or, if he cannot do that, to spoil their power of bringing help and peace. If he can make a soul faint and lose trust in prayer, he has so far loosed its hold on God, and put it by itself, unarmed and weak. Men must, while on earth, make up their minds to have to face temptation, even when they draw nearest God. But though they cannot be untempted, they need not sin; they can grow more strong and sure of God through trial.

The power to pray is a habit to be formed, like all other habits of Christian well-doing, by thought and practice. It is also a gift which God gives, as He gives other graces, to those who wait on Him for it, and use the means He blesses. Many people forget this, and wonder why they are not able at once and always to pray aright. They seem to expect that when they kneel down and address God, their spirits will of course fall into the right posture, worldly things will pass out of view, and no thought will wander.

Prayer is a solemn hard work, as well as high and blessed privilege. No one can hope to succeed in it, any more than in any other work, who does not put forth his whole will and force in beginning and in going on. Many who grieve over coldness and wandering in prayer have no right to look for anything else. They kneel down with no effort to look away from all else to God. They begin, not having made up their minds what to pray for, or asking whether they really mean what they say, and wish to have their petitions granted. They leave the Divine Presence, as if they had done their part and no more thought were needed.

The heart ought to be always ready to call on God in every sudden trial, and to thank Him for each blessing as it comes. In work and in pleasure, after falls, or when

grace has put back some sharp temptation, the soul should at once turn to the quick watchful sympathy of God. But when man draws near his Maker in solemn worship, he should prepare himself and his offering. If it be worth while to pray, it is worth while to take pains that prayer be real, and not a vain form, or a foolish mockery.

Such a plain rule as the following may help those who wish to pray with free mind and true heart, and to gain and keep a blessing. Put yourself before God, as if you went out of the world to meet Him, and called Him to draw you close. Think of who He is, and who you are; of God's greatness and your littleness. Pray that you may pray aright. Think over what you mean to say to God and to ask for. Get firm hold of this in mind and heart. Then begin with all your soul's strength to pray. If you feel and mean your words, and wish for what you ask, and believe you are speaking to One who hears, your thoughts will not easily be drawn away. When you have prayed, rise up, sure that as God is true you have an answer. Use the grace given that you may draw near more worthily when next you pray.

FORMAL PRAYER.

MOST men complain that they find it hard to pray. Their thoughts wander. They speak words which come only from the lips, which they do not feel in their hearts, and scarcely think of in their minds. They rise from their knees, and sometimes a fear comes over them, when they feel that they have only gone through an empty form. Many do wish and try to pray, but they fail so sadly that they soon are tempted to give up trying. There are very few who do not have cause to mourn for unreal prayer. One of the saddest thoughts to the best of God's people is their want of heart and warmth when they come before the God whom they truly love.

How is this? We know that many pray only because they have been taught in childhood to kneel down and say some words at some fixed times, and they have not been able to give up the habit. They do not care for the things they ask for, and have no real thought of the meaning of what they do. These, of course, pray to quiet their own minds, not with a view of gaining any end, or with any clear idea of the use of prayer. Now and then they hear a voice warning them that, if prayer be anything, it must be a very awfully real thing; but they put the thought away, and go on as before. It is plain why these people offer God only words: they do not try to offer more. But how is it that those who are well aware of their need, and of the value of what they seek, and who love God truly, and trust His word with a firm faith, often seem so helpless when they try to pray? It is as if their hearts and thoughts grew more wandering when they did all in their power to fix them, as if God was far away and they could not get near Him, as if their words came back like a stone thrown into the air, as if there were no desires within them strong enough to make them rise up to heaven.

There are many things to be thought of when we look at this matter. God often tries the faith of those He loves, that they may be led to feel more their need of Him and loneliness without Him. Thus He warns them of the danger of turning aside, or growing cold in love. He draws them to press nearer to Him, and keep Him, as it were, more in sight, and cry to Him more loudly and earnestly. A man may feel as if God had hid His face from him, when all the time God watches his true heart with the most deep love, as He looked on Jesus, when He cried to Him out of the darkness from the Cross. There may be no fault in the sad, worn, downcast doer of his heavenly Father's will; he may be all well-pleasing in God's sight, but bearing the great last trial which is to help to make him perfect.

And when we draw nigh to God, we must expect to have more reason to resist Satan; for then our foe sees that his power over us is in the greatest danger. We must never

be too sure, however, that the fault is not in ourselves. We must always ask carefully how far our sins have hid God's face from us. We may be going on in some evil way, which makes it a new sin to come before God. We may have some bad feeling to our neighbour, some wrong thoughts of pride or vanity; we may have little or no faith in God, or patience when we suffer. While we let these faults be in us, and are not sorry for them, and do not seek to get the better of them, God cannot hear us as those who truly want to be made His own. We must not look to be heard and blessed while we keep some sins as too dear to be given up, or too strong for God to drive from us, or too small to be afraid of.

One great cause of failure is that men rush into God's presence hastily. They kneel down, as if for the sake of praying, but they do not pray for the sake of any clear end. They do not put before them what they mean, and prepare themselves for the most solemn thing man can do. They turn from the common, careless talk of the world, and place themselves, at once, at the foot of God's throne. They do not put off their minds' working everyday dress, and clean away from them what is unfit to have on when they speak to heaven; so, careless thoughts, and thoughts of worldly things are with them while they speak most awful words; they hardly realise where they are, and before Whom they kneel.

We ought never to come rashly into the presence chamber of our God. We should always meditate before we begin our prayers. We should think of our state before God, and why we pray. If we use a form, we should think over the words and make them real. If we do not use a form, we should try to know how to pray, and what to pray for. We should be sure that all our words are thoughtful, and that with our hearts we long to gain the things we ask God to give us. We should pray for the heart to pray aright—that we may be able to forget all else, and only think of God and of the desires we lay before Him. It is not enough to ask God to forgive our sins; we should try to find out, as far as we

can, what sins in us need pardon. It is not enough to pray for grace; we should learn what special grace we want, in what ways we want to be strengthened against temptation, in what virtues we fail. We must try to know our needs, one by one, to tell them to God one by one, as if He would not know them except we told Him. We must look and wait for an answer to each prayer, sure that God hears each, and, if it is good for us, has Himself given us the desire which He will rejoice to satisfy.

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING.

GOD teaches us to let our requests be made known to Him by "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." We may "pray without ceasing," "always," living as in God's presence, under His care, owing all things to His love and acting upon our sense of dependence upon Him. We bring our "supplications" to Him when we bring ourselves more directly and with more set aim to the throne of grace, laying our cares and wants before our Father. There may be prayer without actual supplication; when supplication ceases the soul need not and ought not to go from its posture of prayer. True supplication is that which comes from a soul that lives habitually a life of prayer. Indeed a soul which does not at all aim to live a life of prayer cannot hope that its supplications are acceptable. Surely God is slighted if we only seek Him when a sense of need is forced on us, and we have to own that only He can help us. Surely His goodness is trifled with, if we only look up to Him when we want to gain some gift. Surely it is base to turn away from Him when we have got His alms, glad to forget Him while we think we can afford to do so. There are some who treat their fathers so, looking on them only as bankers, or friends to

help them out of the shame and loss which their follies bring; giving them none of the right honour which is a father's due. We must not be thus selfish and mean in dealing with our Father on High. His love is grieved, if those on whom He is always ready to pour out fatherly kindness only seek Him when He seems the one resource left, and value Him not for His own sake but for what they can get from Him.

So with "thanksgiving." God does not welcome a hymn of praise or a passing word of acknowledgment now and then, however glowing the words, or strong the feeling at the time, if the heart is only warmed out of its usual coldness by some special excitement. The calm, quiet, peaceful joy in God's goodness, the life lived to please Him, the steady, brave hope which leads the soul, sure of God, to press on towards holiness, is the true return which God asks us to render for all His mercies. Our words should be the voice of praise and thanksgiving which breaks out at times to express a feeling, ever strong and deep, which possesses the soul and guides the will.

THE LIFE AND THE PRAYER.

"YOU are quite wrong, Sir; I never forget my heavenly Father; there is not a night that I don't pray to Him; and when I have had beer, I think I pray more earnestly." These were the words calmly spoken, with an injured air, in answer to a clergyman's warnings. The man who said them idled half his time, was drunk most of his time, starved and sometimes threatened his old, sick mother. Yet he thought himself wronged when called ungodly, and pleaded with to mend his ways. The one thing he did which showed any belief in God, was to kneel down and say some words at night. He broke each law of God boldly, when it came in his way. He would go home after an evening of riot, and while his mother was trem-

bling with fright from his foul oaths and stupid violence, he would kneel down before God.

What could be said to one so blind and hard? How could he be taught that what he called his prayer was only a new sin, and that the belief in God, which made him go through the form of prayer, showed his sin to be more daring? The Eye which saw him kneel, saw him a drunkard, an idler, a bad son. The Ear which heard his prayer, heard also his oaths and his foul talk. He seemed to think that he might safely go on in sin, while he paid God the daily courtesy of one act of formal worship. This is a true case, though it may seem to some impossible. But is it a rare sort of case? What of the prayers of many who are never missed from God's house, who begin and end each day with prayer? Is not the prayer of many an abomination, because it comes from those who go on, and mean to go on, in wickedness? They pray from habit, or to still conscience, or to get the ends they wish for. They think to make God useful as a helper whom they need, but they will not let Him be any check on their pleasant, or lazy, or profitable sins. Some, like this poor drunkard, who thought he was more devout in his tipsy state, throw more feeling into their prayers in times of excitement or depression caused by sin. They thus seek a passing relief, but have no thought of a change of life; they would cease to pray, if they thought prayer would hinder them in the course of evil gain or joy which they have chosen.

Prayer is a real thing, and our life is real too. God looks at both. One must agree with the other. What we pray for, we must strive for. What we ask God to make us, we must try to be. What we say to God, we must mean, and our lives must show that we mean. If we draw nigh with our lips, while our heart is far from God, and our lives are going away from Him, our prayers are, it may be, the most hopeless sign of our soul's state. True, the lives of the best will fail, and come short of the aim of their devotions. But the effort may be true, the aim be high. What God asks is that we should in our life remember our prayers, and in our prayers remember our life; that we

should live in the felt presence of Him who hears our prayers, and pray to God as to One who knows and will judge our life. He will inspire both, and will help us ever to wait on Him for blessing in a life consecrated by our prayers.

PRAYING ALWAYS.

MEN often find it hard to pray, because they do not know what prayer means. They have many wants that press on them with sore weight; they have many sins which they mourn for; they have many woes and cares, in which they feel the need of help and comfort. They long for someone to whom they may lay bare their heart, to whom they may tell all, and who may be able to be their friend. They have a kind of faith in God, but they do not think of Him much as of One who can be found, and whose help can be made sure of. He seems far off, too high above them, too great to come down to hear the poor words they are able to speak, too great to care for all the little things that make up their trials. In times of very sore grief, or sin, they will cry to God, but even then they fear that their words are not right. They think so much of this, that they lose most of the comfort and the rest that come from the very act of casting the soul on the Almighty. There is very little of the settled, continual holding fast to God and living near Him, which makes a man's whole life be prayer.

God wants us to know Him and to trust Him. He wants us to be sure that He knows all about us, and cares for us, and for all we do and are: "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear Him." A father thinks nothing little, which makes his own child sad or happy, which shows or helps the child's love for him. And so God looks on what concerns us with the tenderness of one who understands

our weakness, and who, with all the love of God, longs for our holiness and joy. We must not doubt Him; nothing grieves Him more than this. We must give Him all our faith; that gladdens His Fatherly heart most truly. Prayer is the expression of trust in God as our friend and helper in all that threatens, or harms, or grieves our body and soul. The way to pray is plain: all we need is to know what our wants are, and to let our requests be made known to God, leaving them with Him, sure that He careth for us. He knows all before we ask, but He will have us draw nigh to Him, and prove our faith, that we may gain more than we look for, and learn to cast our care on Him in quietness.

We should always feel as if we saw God by us; as if His voice was heard in our ears; as if we could meet His look of love and pity, and could see Him bend to listen to our words.

When we pray, we should speak to Him all that is in our heart, telling Him the whole truth. Have we sinned? we should open our grief in full plain words, saying all that need be said if we were speaking to a fellow man. Are we sad? we should hide no part of our care, but lay its whole weight on the divine love. Are we in doubt? we should describe our difficulties, at once, with no delay, putting all before our one best Adviser. So in all that meets and tries us; so too in all that cheers; we should aim at never being alone, but with simple childlike faith and openness, make God our friend, and trust Him with perfect confidence. Those only who have tried this know how it brings to the soul the peace of God. No other kind of prayer is enough without this. And this is within the reach of all; the youngest and most unlearned can get the habit of telling God everything. He will teach those who come sincerely, how to come ever less and less unworthily. He will encourage their faith, and meet their love and confidence with more than they ask or think.

IS HE HAPPY?

PEOPLE have almost lost sight of the true meaning and end of religion. What it is, and why God has given it to us, are little known and thought of. With most, it is not a thing to guide man's life, but to make him safe, or think himself safe, at the hour of death. It is not a thing to prepare man here for a life hereafter, but to comfort him, after a misspent life, with a hope that God is merciful and cares as little as he how he has lived. Nothing shows this more than the question which is nearly always asked when a man is on his dying bed. His neighbours are anxious to know one thing, whether he is "happy." It matters not what the man's life has been, the question is the same. He may have lived all his days in the faith and fear of God, or he may be one who, till he knew he was dying, gave no thought to religion. The one thing that his friends look for is that he should be "happy." If he is quiet, "reconciled," without fear or care; if, perhaps, his pain makes him long to be out of life, they are satisfied. They think all must be well with his soul, because he himself feels no alarm for the future, or sorrow for the past.

Think of this. What a mistake this feeling shows! Is "happiness" always a sign that the dying man has a sure hope? Is there not a peace which belongs to the sleeping or the dead? Can we test our state before God by our feelings? Are we sure to be in the sight of God what we seem to ourselves? May not feelings come as much from the state of the body as from the state of the soul? Physicians tell us that there are some diseases in which men are always hopeful, and that others make it hard for the dying to take any but a dark view of all things. And to whom are God's promises given? Is it to those who rejoice, to those who are free from care? Do they not belong to those who mourn, to those who weep, to the broken and the contrite heart? And does not the Bible tell us of the

wicked, what men long to see in those they love, "There are no pangs in their death."

Those to whom to live has been Christ may feel that to die is gain for them. They may lay them down in peace, and need feel no alarm. But yet death is a dark valley, and judgment is an awful thing to face. And will not those who have learned the love of God mourn, when the end of life has come, that so little has been done for their Saviour? Will not the very nearness of the salvation, and the love of Him whose gift it is, make them sad in their peace, and make their joy in believing sober? And so it is that the holiest are often the most full of care. The reason is plain, because they know what it is to die. They have learned the power of grace that has tried to lead them, and they know more of the majesty and of the love of God. As a rule, those who have defied God all their days have no fear in going to meet Him face to face. We read in books of despairing death-beds, but they are hardly ever seen. Often the clergyman, when he is asked of some hard sinner whether he is happy, is ready to groan out—Would God there were any sign of misery; then there would be hope that heaven is pleading with the soul; then the promise to the weary and heavy laden might be pleaded. But the peace, the calm of one who knows not what sin is, and goes out with no fear into a strange world, to meet One who is a Stranger, is more awful than the agony of despair. What is the meaning of that quiet of the soul in the dying impenitent sinner, when his life is ending, and has all been spent in Satan's service? Is it not that he cares nothing for having so long trampled Christ's Blood under his feet? Is it not that he feels no shame for a life of sin; no sorrow that he has dishonoured God, and that it is now too late to glorify Him? May it not be that he is calm because God's Spirit has gone away, wearied with striving in his soul? May it not be that the sentence has passed, Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone? It is a fearful thing for a man to be "happy" when he offers himself to God like a cast off garment, after Satan and the world have worn him out. One

thought of God's glory and His love, one gleam of true hope, must fill him with sorrow in proportion as he has ground for joy.

ALL OUR DAYS.

"I ALWAYS think of religion when I am sick." So said a man in answer to a friend's pleading. He looked on religion as something like physic, useful in case of sickness, but to be done without as long as possible. This "thinking" did him no good, it led to no change. As soon as he got well, thoughts of other things filled his mind, and religion was put aside on the shelf till it was wanted when he was sick again. This man was like many others: he was unlike them in knowing the truth, and owning it frankly. Perhaps most people have a sort of feeling that religion is less daily food, than medicine for special cases and times. They think it necessary and easy to be more religious in sickness than in health. They do not live as they would like to be found in the hour of death. They count upon the work of their sick-bed, and the prayers and thoughts of their last days, to make them ready to meet God. This is a mistake even of many who call themselves religious. It is a dreadful mistake, by which souls lose holiness and joy, and bring on themselves much sorrow and shame. It is a mistake by which many souls are lost.

God claims our full love and work all our days. He bids us serve Him while our hearts are fresh, and our minds clear, and our bodies strong. He does not ask us to give Him half our power while we are at our best, and only to be all His when we are worn out with life's cares. Besides, we need the good and comfort of religion from the first to the last. It is meant to make our cares lighter and our joys truer, and help us to live always as the children of a Divine Father, who is well pleased with us.

But if we have not religion before sickness comes, it may be too late to seek it. Sickness and old age are not times for making provision either for this world or the next. Old habits cannot be got rid of at will; new habits cannot be gained at once when we want them. If a man has been all his life growing to be one kind of person, it is folly to think of becoming another sort of person in the few last hours of life. A shoemaker and a navvy would be thought mad if they tried in old age or sickness to take one another's places and do one another's work. It is no more wise for a man to go on hardening his heart, and training himself to the ways of worldliness and sin, while he counts on taking his place among God's children when the world has no place for him, and sin holds out to him death as wages. Many kinds of sickness make it hard for a sufferer to think at all. Great pain, or drowsiness, or unconsciousness, comes often without warning, and the man lies crushed in body and mind by a sudden blow, so that as illness found him he must pass out of life to meet God.

Even where this is not the case, prayers and vows made on what seems a death-bed are little to be trusted. Most men will call on God when they think they are going to meet Him. They are humble, while they feel helpless in God's hands. They dislike their sins, while they feel the smart of them, and dread the punishment. It is easy to resolve against sin when temptations are away, and alone with God the soul learns what a solemn thing life is. But no one can be quite sure of the truth of his feelings and words till he is again free to choose between God and sin, between the vanities of the world and the great realities of which faith knows.

The man whose heart is true will be afraid when he finds himself putting off anything that is in his power to do. He will ask himself whether he is, after all, as true as he desires to be. For he thinks of the love of God and the life of Christ on earth, and the death, and the risen life. He knows that he is called to follow the example of his Saviour and to use His grace, as well as to trust in His atonement. He prays for more love for God, and more

longing after holiness, that he may do and be, all his days, what God wills, that he may glorify Him on earth, as well as enjoy Him in heaven.

TWO LIVES OR ONE.

MANY people make a great mistake in their religion. They try to live two separate lives—one for this world, and one for the next. They work, they amuse themselves, they rest, they mix with their friends. This is one life. They go to church, say prayers, read the Bible and good books. This is another life. The two lives are kept quite apart, as if one would hinder the other. The time spent in work and rest seems taken from religion. The time given to religion is counted as so much chance of worldly gain lost. So the Sunday life and the week-day life, the work for heaven and the work for earth, go on by themselves, each, as it were, trying to draw from the other as much thought and power as possible. So it is that both suffer.

Man is not two, but one, and his life cannot be divided thus. His religion is meant to help on his daily work, and give new zest to his daily pleasures. His common tasks and wholesome pleasures are meant to be indeed a true part of his religion. Both must act together, if either is to go on well.

There are times, indeed, when this world and all in it must be put out of sight, when the soul must look only up to God, and turn away from all else. There is never a time when God must be lost sight of. All day long the life should be lived as in His sight, as the life of a son whose father watches him, and takes a loving interest in all he does. Thoughts of this world should not go with man in his hours of worship. Thoughts of the other world must be ever in the mind in the hours of toil or enjoyment.

Do all to the glory of God is the rule God gives. Let your hours of devotion hallow you, and help you to live your common life in a heavenly spirit. Let your common life in the world be a using of the grace found in the presence of God, and a waiting for His blessing in the daily path of duty.

BIBLE-READING.

EVERYONE has a Bible now. Most people think they know something about Scripture. At the same time there is vast ignorance of the words of God. Some have Bibles, but don't read them; some read, but gain no good by reading. Perhaps, when each parish had one Bible chained in the church, there was more real knowledge; for men made the most of what they read, and put it into their minds and hearts so that it should stay there and light their lives.

The Bible is like no other book, and must not be read as others may be read. It comes to us from God, in the form which God knew would be best for us. We can only learn from it by the help of the same Spirit who taught and guided those who wrote it. We should remember, when we read, that the words before us were written for our learning, and should pray for grace to find out and profit by what they say to us—not to people in general, but to *ourselves.*

The Bible should be read regularly. Careless people may think they can find in it nothing new. The thoughtful and devout learn more and more how far they are from exhausting the full meaning and power of even the most well-known verses.

The Bible should be read so that one part may throw light on others, and with all the help that can be had from well-proved books. The references in the margin are of great use, and good plain commentaries, such as those of the Christian Knowledge Society, can be had at a very low price.

Verses and short passages should be searched into with close care, so as to get as deeply as possible into their meaning and spirit. Besides this, whole Gospels and Epistles should be read through, as we would read a new pamphlet or book on a matter in which we feel a great personal interest. So we may understand the plan of the writer, and know the thread of thought that runs through all. We shall also be less likely to make mistakes as to the meaning of the arguments and the ground of the promises and warnings.

The Bible is like other books, in that it cannot be understood without work. It is not like other books, in that it cannot be read to good purpose without prayer. He who is willing to work and to pray will find a reward for both in the patience and comfort of the Scriptures of God.

A BOX OF PILLS.

ONE afternoon I was told that a man who lived close by was very ill. He thought he had small-pox, and wished me to call and see if this were the case. I went to the house, and found the man sitting up, but plainly in a low, weak state, and rather anxious. His arms were covered with great raised spots. I saw at once that there was nothing like small-pox, but the case was one which I fancied the patient might be able to explain. "What have you been doing to yourself?" I asked. "How did all this begin?" It turned out that the man, feeling unwell, had bought a box of Cockle's pills, and instead of taking one or two, had swallowed the whole boxful at one dose. Of course there was no need to ask any more questions. I relieved the man's mind of the fear of small-pox, and told him what to do, so as to get rid of the effects of his overdoses; and then we began to talk of other things.

I said that I had not seen him in church for a long time, and asked why? He gave me the old threadbare answer,

"Well, I see so many people go who are no better for going, but seem only to get worse, that I don't see the good of going." There are, of course, lots of replies to this. Everyone knows them, and they ought to keep any man with any brains in his head from pleading such a dull excuse for neglect of public worship. These replies are old and threadbare, and I was sick of using them; so I was glad that this man gave me some new ground to stand on, and a new way of putting the old truth to him.

I said something like this. "When I came here to-day, I found you looking and feeling very unwell. You were ill, and you got some medicine and took it. After taking it you found yourself no better, but far worse. The fault is plainly not in the medicine, but in the way you took it. Had you followed the directions given, you might have been quite well now. You chose to neglect these and take your own way, and so you are worse. You have no right to go about and say that Cockle's pills are bad, or at least useless pills, because you got harm through taking them like a man careless of his body's good or left by heaven without brains. Just in the same way, you have no right to speak slightingly of means of grace, because some take their souls' medicine, and seem worse Christians after it. The mere taking medicine, as you have learned to your cost, will not do good. The mere going to church, or using other means of grace, will prove as unprofitable. People who trifle with their bodies bring on themselves pain and sickness. People who use carelessly what God gives to cure and strengthen their souls need not wonder themselves, and ought not to be wondered at, if all goes wrong with them more and more. A good thing may be spoiled in the using. Don't judge of this, which perhaps is a very good medicine, by your case. Don't say that it brings out blotches on the skin, and has other bad effects which you feel now. All this is your own doing. And don't say that church-going fails to bring help and healing, because you or some others go to church recklessly, and with as little care to do right as you showed when you emptied the pill-box. When you are tempted to plead

this excuse for not going to church, think of Cockle's pills, and I am sure you will not plead it."

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO CHURCH?

"I SEE many people go who are none the better for it. I don't want to go to church to be a hypocrite." This is the answer that is often made to the question, "Why don't you go to public worship?" Of course it is quite true that there are those who, when they go to church, leave their hearts outside, and so make their presence in the house of God a vain thing. There are those who go as a mere form, without any meaning. There are those who have an object before them, but only a worldly one; they want to win favour, or get gain. Thus they indeed make God's house a house of merchandise—a den of thieves.

But we must be slow to judge those whose hearts are hidden from us. People may be very earnest, who seem to us to be triflers. People may be a joy to angels, whom we, in our rash haste, mourn over or despise. We are too ready to take for granted that we can see through our neighbours, and know, at all events, all that is bad or wanting in them. We seldom quite trust ourselves so as to give them credit for good points of which they show signs. We know so little of ourselves, that we ought to be very slow to pronounce on others. The way in which we are often misunderstood and judged wrongly ought to teach us that our sentence on others may be very unjust and foolish. And even though we see plain faults, this does not give us a right to put a bad name on those who commit them. How do we know what the temptation has been? Are we sure that we could have withstood one, of half the strength and suddenness? How do we know but that the offender, while we are talking of him as a hypocrite, is on his knees in lowly sorrow crying to God for pardon? Perhaps our cold scorn may make his repent-

ance harder, may drive him to be proud and defiant, and rob heaven of its joy over his return.

Men do not become saints all at once; they must begin as children, very weak, and ignorant, and awkward; and, like children, they are sure to have many tumbles when they first try to walk. What would we think of a mother who scoffed at her child's efforts to go alone? Would we not be indignant if she were severe with it because it could not at once walk and run like a man? The commonest trade needs to be learned, and the first attempt will be a poor one. Many a blunder will be made. But the teacher looks for this, and if he be wise will encourage his pupil, and not laugh at or abuse him. Is it not shameful, then, that when one begins with feeble, doubting step to walk in God's way, and with trembling hand to do God's work, eyes watch for his failure, and he is told, with taunts, that he is not trying at all, because he is not perfect at once? This is bad enough when it is done by those who know nothing of the hardness of repentance. It is mere stupidity in them; they talk of what they know nothing about. It is dreadful sin, when those who have lived long as the disciples of Jesus offend one of His little ones.

But, granting that many go to church and come away again without being better, or good, this is surely no reason why others should not go to church at all. If one man makes a bad use of a thing, this does not prevent me from making a good use of it; this is no reason why I should refuse to use it at all. Some men go to the doctor, and only get worse; but I do not prove myself a man of sense by choosing, on this account, to do without advice when I am sick. Some men eat and drink so as to ruin their health; my right place would be a lunatic asylum, if I refused food, and gave this as my reason.

The plain truth is that men who neglect religious duties don't feel quite easy about their neglect. The care that others show is a reproof to their carelessness. It comforts them a little to find that people who use the means of grace are, after all, often no better than themselves; they

like to be able to point to faults in religious people, as a kind of set off against what conscience warns them about. But this does not mend matters in the least. One man is not made able to live without food, because the food of another, through the bad state of his health, turns to poison. One man is not able to live without work, because his neighbour works so badly that he gets no wages. If other people are none the better for going to church, that need not hinder us from being a great deal the better. If other people are hypocrites, surely we may be true men, notwithstanding.

Enough for us if God has told us to meet in public worship as a duty, and has promised His special presence and blessing. There can be no doubt about these questions in the mind of the man who reads his Bible, and looks at religion in the light of common sense. God's words are as plain as words could be. If we may refuse to be guided by Him on this point, we need not mind what He says on any point. And if God be our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, how can we hold back when those who own Him meet to do Him honour? Has He not a right to our open homage? Even if our going to His courts seem to be no honour, surely our keeping away is a slight. Surely, at least, it looks like it to others, and is taken as a sign that we care little for Him. And what can help more to stir up love for God, and love for our fellow men, than joining in the common worship of those who share with us the gifts of God and the right to call Him Father? What can help more to lift us above the littleness of this world, than to go apart with the two or three whom the Lord has promised to be among, and lift up one voice of prayer and praise? The man must be very wanting in religion, or in sympathy, who has no love for public worship. The man is simply foolish and conceited, who undervalues what he has never given an honest trial.

MY HEART IS THERE.

"IF I am not there, my heart is there." This is one of the countless answers people make when urged to go to church. It is one of the most well meant. It sounds fair. The speaker generally says it civilly, and has no doubt that it ought to satisfy those who think him careless. In some cases men cannot do more than have their hearts in God's house, where His people meet to worship. They are kept away by sickness, or some state of things which they have no power to change. Then they can be in spirit where their bodies cannot be. They can, at the hour of prayer, turn their thoughts and hearts towards God, along with the company of the faithful. They can join in the pleading of the work of Christ, and bring their prayers and praises before God. Many do this, and find God meet them, and give them all the full blessing and joy for which their souls long. But when God puts means of grace within men's reach, they have no right to look for the grace, while they neglect the means. God fed Israel with manna, because He had brought them out into the wilderness; but the manna ceased when they could get food in the common way.

When God calls us to come, body, soul, and spirit, we may not think to put Him off by saying, "My heart is there." Most often the heart of those who speak thus is not where they say it is. If it were, if they loved the habitation of God's house, they would go thither. But they do not love it, they do not care for the help and gladness that only public worship gives. The truth is that they are listless, and are taken up with other things which they value more. They mean merely that their heart is not set against religion and church-going. Perhaps they have never once made an effort of thought, and heart, and spirit, to take part in what they knew was going on in the house of God. Perhaps there has never

been any real wish to find a way for the heart and will to bring the body. Of course it is no use going to church, if the heart is left at home, or among the world's cares and pleasures. On the other hand, it is no use sending the heart or mind to church, while the body is willingly kept away in idleness, or in work at home. If a king sends to call his subjects to meet him, those will not win his favour who say they feel towards him loyally, but do not take the trouble to go. He will take their neglect of his summons as a proof of disloyalty.

Again: The prodigal son was not fed by having his heart and thoughts where his father's house offered bread enough and to spare. Only when he arose and went did he take part in the abundance.

ALWAYS AN EXCUSE.

AN Irishman was once pressed to make a vow against whisky. He did so, but added to the pledge, "barring it's a wet day, barring it's a dry day, barring it's a hot day, barring it's a cold day, barring I meet a friend." So it turned out that he drank just as much and as often as before, and might as well have never thought of being a sober man.

A great many people seem to have the same loose and easy rule about going to church. If you ask them, they will tell you that they go, and mean to go. But in truth, as a matter of fact, they only go when there is no reason to put against going, and nothing that they like better to do. One day it is too hot, and the church is close; another day it is too cold, and they are afraid of draughts. One day it is too wet, and the next is so very fine that they owe it as a duty to their health to take a walk. Friends drop in, and it would not be civil to leave them. Strangely enough, church is the only place that the weather has so much to do with. Sickly people will face a blazing sun, or a storm

of rain, or bitter frost to do their marketing. No friend will keep them from work or worldly pleasure. God's house is the only place that makes people think so much of their health, or be so careful to be civil to their friends. On hot days, the church is often the coolest room in the parish. On cold days, it is often the most snug. If it rain, there are such things as umbrellas and cloaks, and rain does not often get through a church roof. If it be fine, no one is to blame for taking a walk, out well into the fields, where man has not put God's works out of shape, and dirtied them and covered them with bricks. But there are 24 hours in the day. Two services take up about 3; this leaves 21 hours. Spend 11 in sleeping and eating; there are still 10 left, and this gives time enough for walking which will tire most men.

As to friends, if they come in at church time, bring them with you. If they see that you make going to church a thing of course, as much so as going to work or taking your dinner, they will most likely go with you. So you will do good to others. If you seem ashamed of church-going, or not to care much whether you go or not, you do them harm by your bad example, as well as lose good yourself. If they try to keep you away, they show very great want of manners, and besides are plainly not the sort of people for Sunday company. They are not the friends for whom you ought to turn your back on God.

KILL THE PIGS.

A GREAT many years ago, I was called to visit a man who had been struck down by sudden sickness. He had only a few weeks to live; he knew his state, and was not wanting in deep, serious feeling about it. He was glad to hear, and he spoke freely. But there was one great hindrance in his way and in mine. This seemed to mix up with his thoughts, and come between him and

every other interest. He had always been a lover of animals, and had taken special pride in showing the best pigs in the district. There were two pigs at the end of the garden, which he thought were the best he had ever fed. He seemed unable to get these pigs out of his mind for many minutes together. In the middle of the most serious conversation he would make some remark about them, and go off into long details about the way he had brought them to such perfection. At first I tried to stop him, but I found it was no use. The pigs seemed to have the power of taking the place of all else that tried to find room in his thoughts. Then I tried another plan. When I came to see him, I went first to look at the pigs, and then I talked to him for five minutes or so about them, and tried to show interest in the various breeds of pigs and the different ways of feeding them. Then, having given the pigs time enough, I changed the subject sharply. This worked fairly well, but I could see that there was often a struggle in the man's mind to keep the pigs out of our conversation, and that he could not keep them out of his thoughts. So I made up my mind that the pigs must die. I asked the man's wife whether they were fit for killing. She told me that they were nearly so, but that it would be a loss to kill them for a few weeks. "Never mind," I said, "while they live your husband cannot attend rightly to the care of his soul. You must have them killed, and off his mind." She felt the truth of my words, and acted on them. I had no more trouble with my poor friend. His one great difficulty was removed, and for the rest of his life he was able to think and pray and look upwards without distraction.

We have not only to lay aside the "sin that doth so easily beset us," but "every weight," if we would be free to run the race that is set before us. Often, as in this man's case, something harmless in itself is to us, in our special case and state, our great hindrance, holding us back strongly. Our wise safe course is to "Kill the pigs,"—to run no risk, but get rid, at any cost, of that which makes the high interests of our souls take the second place.

NO EXCUSE AT ALL.

PEOPLE have many excuses for neglecting religious duties. Some are clever, some are stupid. The time spent in thinking them out and pleading them would, if rightly used, make the world a great deal better. The excuse that seems to give most comfort is that those who attend to religion do not at once become perfect, or at least look faultless. Talk to a man about church-going, or any other religious duty, he will very often say, "Look at so-and-so; he goes to church, and he does not seem much different; I don't hold with that sort of religion: if a man professes religion he ought to act up to it." There is sometimes a good deal of honesty in this sort of defence, but in most cases there is none at all. There is never either charity or good sense. As an excuse it is quite worthless, as anyone can know for himself by asking whether he would dare to say it in plain words on his knees before Almighty God.

Those who name the Name of Christ, and call themselves His followers, must beware lest by their inconsistency they dishonour their Master as well as themselves, and harm the souls of others as well as their own. But on the other hand, ungodly people must beware lest they add to their sins by harshly judging and by "offending" the weak ones in Christ's flock. How can they read the hearts of those whose lives they watch, eager to find them slipping? What do they know of the inward struggle, of the shame at failure, of the trembling earnest prayers for help? Men do not change all at once. He who in heart leaves all to go after Christ is not safe from outbreaks of his old habits. He must fear lest he even deny his Lord. Perhaps while the hard scoffer glories in his downfall and what looks like the exposure of his religion as a sham, Christ welcomes his penitence and gives pardon lovingly. Perhaps while Christ bids him rise and go on hopefully,

a jeering journeyman of Satan tells him that he "is found out, and he need not try to seem better than his neighbours." What would the men who settle themselves comfortably in ungodliness, because Christians are not faultless, have said of S. Peter, when he went out of the Judgment Hall with the Lord's look of appealing love melting his heart?

It seems to be forgotten too, that if it be sin not to follow Christ well, it is also sin not to follow Him at all. Men are not safe because they neglect religion altogether. God will judge them one by one. He will not ask whether their neighbours have only half acted up to their profession. He will ask them on what ground they have denied Him both in profession and in life. God is not a Master whom we can work for or not as we choose, and who will only call us to account for not doing what we undertake to do. We are His, and we are bound to serve Him, whether we like or not.

Our Creator, to whom we owe all, now and for ever, declares that He has something to teach us, and something to give us, which are needful for our well-being. Those who listen to Divine truth, and learn it, sin if they fail to act upon it. Those who come for Divine grace, and receive it through the appointed means, sin if they do not use it to make their lives and themselves holy. They need their own prayers, and the prayers of all who love God and souls. But what right has that man to look down on them and censure their failings, who by his life says to God, "I do not care for the wisdom that cometh from above; I do not want the grace provided for weak dying souls; I will not read; I will not hear and learn; I will not humble and exert myself to seek Thy grace in the means by which it is bestowed?" Those who make a profession of religion *may* be wrong, all they do and speak may be unreal: but it is not for us to judge them; before God they stand or fall. Those who openly live without seeking knowledge or grace from God, or owning Him before the world, *must* be wrong. They proclaim it themselves.

MANIFOLD GIFTS.

GOD is real, and His gifts are real. We have many wants of soul, and there is the right grace for each. God knows us, one by one; and is ready to give, from time to time, what is best. There are many kinds of grace; and many ways of seeking them. God tells us of different means of grace, teaching us how to draw near to Him, that He may meet us, and bestow one or another of His manifold gifts of grace. Much grace, of course, comes to us unasked; for grace is God's love reaching down to us and helping us, and God's love is God's own self; for God is love. But much that our souls cannot live without must be commonly sought in the appointed ways, if it is to be had at all. Those who wish for the inward grace of baptism must seek it by being baptized. Those who wish for the strengthening gifts of the Confirming Spirit must wait for them in the laying on of hands. Those who wish for close union with the God-man by His dwelling in them and making them to dwell in Him must take that of which He has said, "This is My Body; this is My Blood." The Holy Scriptures must be read and thought over, if they are to be a light on the heavenward road. Public Prayer and Private Prayer have separate promises; and care in using one means does not make up for neglect of the others. We have no right to say that we can safely refuse any one means that God puts before us. And we have no right to ask, that grace which God offers through means should be made ours without means. If we want God's blessings, the only wise course is to find out how God teaches us to come for them, and in obedient faith to take Him simply at His word.

When we come to any means of grace, we should be always careful to know what it is we seek, and why we seek it, and what we mean to do with it when we have

got it. We ought to have an end clearly set before us when we ask God to hear us while we pray, or to give us some great spiritual boon. And we ought never to ask for what we do not mean to use. It is a sore insult to God to pray for gifts, and then to throw them aside, or live as if they had not been given. God's word is sure, and if we seek with honest heart and will, we may take for granted that we have gained what God promised, and that we may set to work in the new strength of it.

When God's gifts have come to us, we are still far from knowing all their power. They are not only for the time when we get them, but for all time. They add to those which we had before; and there is in them a life which is meant to grow ever stronger. In the case of what we call natural gifts, the way to improve them is to be careful and persevering in practice with them. So with the gifts of grace: they strengthen as we stir them up and use them in steady, constant, earnest work.

YOUR CHILDREN.

VERY few fathers and mothers know or think about what their children are. So it follows that they fail so sadly in rearing and caring for them. So the world is full of people who have been spoiled merely through the clumsy, careless mistakes of those in whose hands their first years were spent. They might have been healthy, wise, and good; but their bodies, minds, and consciences are put out of shape, stopped in growth, weak and mean. They have no chance, or small chance, of a happy, honourable life, with much hope in it. Their parents are to blame. They were not fit to be trusted with so wonderfully made and so precious a thing as a child. They did not know how hard their task was; they took no care to learn; of course, they have brought shame on themselves, and, more or less, ruin on those whose hard lot it was to

be in their power. Parents often complain that their boys and girls turn out ill; the children might with more right complain of those whose dull brains and rough hands "turned out" such bad work. Birds and beasts have instinct, and this guides them in the care of their young. Men and women have reason, and they are bound to get and use knowledge to fit them for their parental duties. If they do this, they are better than the lower animals; if they do not, the sparrows and the foxes are far better than they.

What is a child? This seems a strange question, and many would smile to be asked it. But this seems the first question people ought to ask, when they find one put into their care. Rather, the question ought to be asked, and the answer well learned beforehand, so that there may be no mistake from the first. Till we know what a thing is, we cannot know what to do with it, or how to treat it for the best. And yet many people go blundering on for years, without ever trying to put before them what that being is, that depends on them for its all. It is hard to say which is most wrong in them—their hearts, or their heads.

What is a child? Look at that little one, just born, with all his life before him. He knows nothing of what is to come. He cannot as yet mould his future in any way. Who can tell what he will be, what his lot, his character, his end? Which of all the countless possible lives will his be? Is it not worth while to try to know what there is in him?

Look first at the frail small form. What a wondrous piece of machinery that is! How fine the parts and the fastenings, the levers, the pulleys! How many the organs, each working with the rest! It seems as if something must go wrong, as if there were hardly hope of all moving and working safely. But there is more than this. The eyes open, and a living soul looks out. There is a mind in that child with all its varied powers, still indeed in infancy, but born for growth and training. There is a will there to choose or to refuse what is put before it, which needs to be guided and made strong. There are

affections to be brought out, and fixed on what is good. There is the power of feeling grief and joy, hope and despair. There is a conscience to be made wise, and tender, and watchful. There is, besides, a power of knowing God and holding converse with Him. There is what will live for ever, and will be for ever what it becomes on earth. This is the trust which parents have—to care for, and strengthen, and train the body, mind, and spirit; and, more or less, to fix the everlasting future of a being that cannot get out of their hands, nor help himself. Were he only body, the responsibility would be untold. Were he only a being with a mind in a body, no one could think too solemnly about the care of him. He is to live for ever; here is enough surely to make the giddiest woman and the most reckless man thoughtful, and fall down on their knees in trembling beside the cradle in which their child lies. Well cared for, he may be strong, hearty, able to enjoy life and do his duty well. Mismanaged, he may be a cripple, or pass his days in pain, or be only half fit to fill his place in the world. And the body has a great deal to do with the mind and the spirit. An unhealthy, weak body often makes the mind dull, and the temper bad. It drags down the whole man by a weight of temptations hard to bear. It checks and hinders in doing duty to self, to neighbours, and to God. The mind, again, and the spirit, have great influence over the body. Knowledge, wisdom, and religion not only keep a man from much that harms his body, but they have a power of their own over his health. Man is one, and anything that has to do with a part of him touches the whole of him.

Take care of your child's body. Keep it clean. In his skin there are miles of fine pipes. You might just as well stop his mouth and nose as let these be stopped; for he breathes through them. Besides, his body is always dying, and through the pores of his skin much of what dies gets away. If they are closed, it poisons him. But he needs food; mind what you give him: you do not put coarse oil into a watch: bad food, or too much of it given

in a wrong way, or at wrong times, will clog and perhaps stop the delicate machine which your child's body is. He needs exercise; let him have plenty of that, for so he makes the blood fill out his limbs and strengthen them. He needs fresh air; do not let him sleep in a close room where all the windows and doors are shut, and the chimney is covered, so as not to let in good air, or let out that which has been used and is poison.

Take care of your child's mind. Teach him to look at things, and learn all he can about them. Be ready to answer his questions. Send him to school, put wise books in his way, and as far as you can, wise people. Make learning a pleasure to him.

Take care of his soul. That needs to be kept clean from outer evil, and made clean from its own inborn corruption. Watch it, guard it, be loving and firm. It must live for ever; do your part that it may live well from the first. Put your child under God's care as soon as you can. Bring him to church, and claim God to be his Father; ask God to wash his soul, to take him under His divine care, to give him a place in His family, and an inheritance among his children. Then teach him as a child of God. Tell him of his Father on high from whom all his pleasure comes, who loves him and sends gifts to him, and has done so much to make him happy. Show him the bright good things in the world which God has made to cheer and help him. Tell him about the Holy Child Jesus, so brave and true and good, afraid of nothing but sin, always high-minded and pure. Train him to live as if he always saw the Child Jesus with him, and God his Father watching him with kindly eye. Take care in no way to frighten your child with God; teach him to fly *to* Him, not *from* Him, and to fear losing His love or being parted from Him. If you let him once be taught to think of God chiefly as a punisher, with a rod in His hand, and a dark hole ready, you have done harm which it will be harm to undo, which may keep him out of reach of God's love always. Guard against this as the worst of all dangers. Teach him to look on God as his best friend,

from whom all his earthly friends and all his joys come. Teach him in his prayers to tell his childish cares, and griefs, and faults into the ear of one ready to comfort and forgive, and make him good. Teach him to count on God's sympathy in his little childish pleasures.

Do not forget to use one great power well—your own example. Your child begins by thinking all you do is right. He watches and copies you. He catches your ways of looking, and speaking, and acting. Let him see in you the love, the gentleness, the holiness of which you tell him when you speak of God. Do not tell him to be one thing, while you are another. Be what you want him to be. Go where you want him to follow. Show him in your own life what you want his to be. Care for your own soul, that it be pure, and true, and brave. So while you win and hold the love of your child, he will learn to love more and more what you are. He will try to be pure, and true, and brave. He will be led to pray for the grace that makes you what he admires and loves. You will be nearer God to become better yourself, and to win an answer to your prayers for your child and God's.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

IT is hard to see a little child in pain; it is strange to see one die. Who has not wondered that those who have never known sin should thus feel the curse of sin? Who has not asked why it can be that so many should be born as if only to pass away, and to leave those who love them mourning? It is well for the lambs, we know, to be taken home thus early to the good safe fold, where no harm can come, where angels watch over them, and teach them the love of God, and tell them of those whom God taught to love them on earth, whom they may meet one day. But why, we ask, should they stay, as they often do, just long enough to grow very dear to their parents,

and then be taken? There seems a plain answer. Are they not sent as messengers from heaven to fasten love to them, and then to rise to a better world, drawing hearts and thoughts after them? This seems sometimes to be the great, or the only end for which they are born. They are made treasures to those whom God would wean from earth and lead towards Him. Then they are placed with God that they may be a new strong attraction, holding still, where they are, the love of hearts that God bound to them while they were here. To many a mother the thought of her child whom God has called is a strong gentle power. She is careful to live with that home in view where she knows she may find her child. She is careful to train those who are left with her, so that the family that has been broken on earth may be united above.

SPOILED CHILDREN.

A CHILD is one of the best and brightest of God's works. To spoil it is to make God's plan for it fail. It is to rob the child of some of the goodness and happiness which God meant it to have. It is to make it less a means of bringing good and cheer to others. A spoiled child is not what God wills it to be while a child: and it does not grow up to be the sort of man or woman that it was born to become.

A child may be spoiled in two ways; either by not taking enough care, or by taking care in unwise ways. Neglect is sure to do harm; foolish management is quite as sure. A child is a most solemn trust to be put into anyone's hands. It is made up of very many parts; and each part has to be thought of in all that is done; for all the parts influence one another. No child is like any other child. Each has its own stock of powers, and its own character, to begin with. In each some power is

stronger than the rest. Each has in itself what leads it to grow in some one direction, and to take some one form of character. The arrangement and proportions of the different parts of the nature are different, even in members of the same family. All these things must be studied and taken into account, as well as the outward things by which the child is surrounded.

Perhaps nearly all children are, more or less, spoiled. Few have all done for them, from the first, to make them all that they might be. Few are made the most of. There are few men and women who have not some fault or flaw in their natures, which might be traced back to some mistake or neglect in their early days.

It is hardly ever realised how soon the forming of a character and the direction of a life for good or evil begin. As soon as a child can "take notice," the world without it, and the people whom it sees and hears, make their mark upon the soft, yielding nature. The bent of mind and disposition, which are taken for granted to have been born in a boy or girl, may be, and doubtless often are, largely the effect of what has been seen or heard or done by others, before the child was thought open to any influences for right or wrong. Few parents, specially the young, think how early and how much their children watch and learn. Few put before them the possibilities of good or evil, joy or misery, that await each child, and how much of all this depends on them. How few undertake and go on with the task which God entrusts to them, roused not only by the thoughtful love of reasonable beings for their children, but by the solemn remembrance that God will one day ask them how they have fulfilled their trust!

The expression "spoiled children" is commonly used as if there were only one way to spoil them, that is, by weak indulgence, letting them have their own way, and giving them what they ask. No doubt a child can be most thoroughly spoiled thus, specially if he sees that the fondness he imposes on is really a form of weakness or laziness. But it is quite certain that more children are spoiled by coldness or hardness than by over kindness. Nothing more

surely puts a child in the way of ruin than to drive back his love and trust, and set him alone, to grow false and selfish and defiant. So long as there is one whom he loves more than he fears, and on whose unselfish affection he can lean; so long as there is one on whose sympathy he can depend and to whom he will not fear to own a fault, he is not all "spoiled." There is still that left in him by which he may be drawn back to good. He can be led to learn of a Father on High, whose love never fails, and whose strong wise hand is ever ready to uphold and guide.

A CREDIT TO ME.

GOOD fathers sometimes have bad sons, who spoil their hopes and fill their lives with grief. Bad fathers sometimes have good sons, who find it hard to keep the fifth commandment, and who are bowed with shame for what they look on as their own disgrace. Sons often fail through not keeping in their father's steps. Many fathers need to be warned from their ways of sin, to take pattern by those whom they ought to lead in right paths.

A clergyman was speaking to a parishioner whose idle, careless, drunken life showed darkly beside the life of his son. He said to him, "Why don't you try to be like your boy? It is a strange thing to tell a father to learn from his child; but you know that you would be a new man, and would take a new place in the world, if you only did as he does." "Oh yes," said the man, "that lad is a credit to me!" "A credit to you!" replied the clergyman, "What do you mean? He is no credit to you, though you are a disgrace and a heart-grief to him; you have had nothing to do with making him what he is. You have done all you could to make him as bad as you are. It is in spite of you, in spite of your bad example, and of your failure in a father's duty, that he is a good, honest fellow, respected by everyone, and sure to get on in the world."

The man had never seen the matter in this light before. He thought over it, and for a time it helped to keep him straight. His son's high character, of which he had been proud, was now a continual reproof; for he felt that it was high because it was unlike his own, and his example had not been followed.

WITH FATHER.

WHILE staying in a small town in the south of France, I was often in the house of a soldier, who had served in the Russian war. One evening as we passed upstairs, his little child, a girl about three years old, called to us to say good night. We went into the room together. He asked the child if she had said her prayers. He then took her hand, with the words—"Now, Marie, with father," and they kneeled down side by side, and joined their voices in a simple short prayer to the Father and God of both. All was done as a thing of course, in no way strange. The man seemed to act as naturally when he prayed with his child, as when he took her in his arms afterwards, and kissed her, and laid her on her bed. It was a sight good to see: the strong soldier who had been showing me his medals, and telling of hard life and hard fighting in the Crimea, praying hand in hand with the little fairy-like child.

I thought much of the words "with father," and I thought sadly how few children hear these words as little Marie heard them. Most English fathers would be ashamed to let a stranger see them guiding their children's prayers. Very few care much whether their children pray or not. And, when the children are taught to say their prayers, it is as a lesson which the father or mother listens to, but does not join in. It is not "with father," or "with mother," the child kneels, but alone; the parent sits or stands by. There is no thought of joining with the child, going along with it into the presence of the good God.

Little children learn to do what they see their parents do, and they go gladly where they see their parents glad to go: they mind less what is told them, than what is shown them. They are quick and ready to follow what is right, if it is "with father." And it is long before children cease to think that what their fathers do is right. But when they have been taught to doubt, they are still ready to copy what they see and hear; and so the guide of the children's life leads them astray. They go into sin and sorrow and shame "with father."

A man comes home cross and grumbling; he scolds and swears at his wife, and frightens the whole household. The boys learn his oaths off by heart, they grow foul-tongued and coarse, they bully their sisters and anyone who is in their power "with father."

A man spends his money on bad pleasures, he stays out late at public-houses, wasting what ought to make his home bright. The boys think there must be some great enjoyment that tempts him so. They try it as soon as they can. They become wild and drunken "with father."

A man neglects church, and idles or wanders about all day on Sunday. The children think that church and school are only a bondage for those who are under rule; they look forward to the time when they can do as they like, and neglect God and break God's Day "with father."

So on in numberless ways. Were the lost in hell asked how they began to lose their innocence and go in ways of sin, would not many of them say, "With father?" Were they asked how they came to be sunk down in hopeless ruin at last, would the answer "I did not follow my father's good example" come from as many as the answer "I lived in sin *with father?*"

HONOUR THY FATHER.

A LITTLE girl looked in through the open door of a house where the family sat at tea. She was about six years old, but her face had written on it a mournful story of sorrow and sin already made part of every-day life. Her dress was ragged and dirty, and her whole look was that of one who had never known the care and love that make early years bright. She was a neighbour's child; but she had so bad a name that the other children in the court were forbidden to speak to her. However, as her hungry eyes were fixed on the well-covered table, and the happy group round it, the woman of the house saw her. She pitied the poor forlorn child, and asked her to come in and have some tea. Hardly a minute had passed before she was shocked to hear from the little lips words that could only have been expected from a man hard in sin. She stopped her, and said, "You will have to go out, if you talk like that." The child looked up, half in wonder, half in defiance, replying, "Why father says far worse words than that when he's had beer." She had not quite lost the instinct that taught her to take for granted that her father was right. She felt that what was said against her was said against him, and she was ready to defend what they both did.

These words were heard in heaven. What a charge for the child's angel to bring before God! What an appeal for pity for her, and judgment on her father! He denied his child the help of a good example, which was her right from him. What he taught her was sin. She learned his evil ways and words. Poor child! She was born of a father whose bad life had broken down his own health, and of a mother whom his ill-usage had weakened. So she began life with all the temptations of the sickly, with the sins of her father visited upon her. He who ought to have been her guardian and helper, bringing to her the love of the Divine Father, made her young life wretched, and her young

heart hard, by coarse neglect. More than this, he was Satan's chief worker in staining her soul. Surely, it had been better for him that a millstone had been hanged about his neck, and that he had been drowned in the depths of the sea, before he brought on his soul the guilt of so "offending" that little one, for whom Christ died.

The case is no rare one. There are many fathers of the same sort, so sunk in selfish sin, so enslaved to some low lust, that there is nothing left in them which a child can love or honour. The Fifth Commandment cannot be kept; for he who would be honoured must be honourable. There are two sides to the commandment. Fathers often force their children to hate or scorn them; or make them feel that they cannot love, and can only pray for them. They are their children's worst foes, because they have most power to harm them. Is it any wonder that God so often in His great mercy takes the little ones away, out of the reach of those who prove unfit for the holy trust of rearing a child for God?

DRIVING AND LEADING.

"I DON'T go myself; but I like the children to go, and I will always take care that they do." This is the sort of answer that is ready on the lips of many fathers and mothers when they are asked to go to church, and so to show that they care about religion, and wish to get God's grace. They quite own that it is right and good to worship God, and seek His blessing; but they seem to think that if they send their children they need not do more. It is as if the boys and girls could bring their parents' prayers and praises before heaven, as well as their own, and bring back a blessing for those who will not take the trouble to go for it themselves. They do not act in the same way about their bodies. They do not think it enough that the children of the family should be fed and clad, and have a doctor when

they are sick. The folly of the mistake would soon make itself felt.

Even if the children's souls got fair play, the parents could not, by caring for others, make up for neglect of themselves. But they do not get fair play. No father or mother needs to be told that children mind what is done far more than what is said. They are very quick in watching those who rule them, and in finding out the worth of their advice. Often when they say little, they are busy with thoughts which would startle those to whom they are afraid to make them known. If they are told that it is right to go to church and pray, they ask in their own minds, "Why don't father and mother do it?" "If it be right for us, why not for them?" Then they give one of two answers. Either their parents do not do what they know is right, or else they make them do as a duty what is not a duty for all, but only a task for children. So the parents are put in the wrong, and lose the "honour" which they ought to show themselves worthy of. If the children have no great sense of right, and are quick-witted, they will judge that what is good for them ought to be good for grown-up people, and that what is not cared for by grown-up people is not of any great value for them. So they will think little of means of grace, and look forward to the time when, as men and women, they will "send their children" and stay at home themselves. If a father, at the head of his table, talked, day after day, about the goodness of a certain dish, pressing all the boys and girls to eat it, but never touching it himself, he would be sure to make them ask some awkward questions. Most likely they would doubt whether he meant what he said, and would soon have the same distaste which he showed.

COME OR GO.

WHICH of these two words are we most ready to hear? Which has most power over us? There is no doubt. We know very well that we don't like to be driven; we would far rather be led. When one stands still and gives us orders, or follows behind us, urging on, we are very apt to rebel and try to break free and have our own way; if we do what we are told, we have no heart in it. It is all task-work, which we toil at alone. And even if we want to do it, and to do it well, it is very hard to know how, and to get on as we wish, when no one shows us the way, and goes with us. But there is help and cheer in the word "Come." We are glad to follow where he who points out the way goes on boldly and cheerfully himself. We are willing to share toil, which we would shrink from facing alone. And it is easier to do our work when one who is skilful works beside and with us, and bids us watch and copy him.

This is the great power of our Lord's teaching. He has not called to us from heaven, and told us of our duty and marked the way by which we are to go, and warned us of sin to be feared and virtues to be gained. He has not been content with saying, "Go"—"Do." He has done far more than this. He has shown us in Himself the beauty of goodness, He has led the way in the path of life. He has fought through the hosts of sin; He has learned obedience in the school of suffering. Now He is in heaven, and from His place of rest His voice says, "Come." Now, too, He is with us helping and cheering, and as He speaks to us in our care and toil, with a brother's kindly voice, it is always the sweet word "Come" that we hear. "Come unto me, come with me, come after me." So we can go bravely where He leads; we can go surely, ever seeing Him before us.

And it is plain why there is so much teaching in the

world, and so few are the better for it. People do not do themselves what they bid others do. They do not tread in the path where they bid others go. Thus their words have no power, because their works and their lives make them vain. Clergymen have a great deal to answer for in this matter, when the sermon they preach in the pulpit is contradicted by the sermon their lives preach all the week—when on Sunday they say "Go" in one direction, and on Monday their lives say "Come" in another. But clergymen are not the only men to blame; fathers and mothers, and those who have the care of children and young people, are very sadly in the wrong in this matter. How often do parents complain of their children going wrong, when they never take any trouble to *lead* them right. They tell them what to do perhaps; they wish them to go to church, and to grow up sober and industrious and religious; but they don't go before them and show them how. Their words teach one thing and their lives teach another. Of course the children put most faith in what the life teaches. They don't care to do what their parents don't think it worth while to do. They look forward to the day when they shall be old enough to do as they like, and follow the careless pattern set them.

Fathers and mothers! your children think more than you suppose. They watch you, and listen to your words. If you set them a bad example, they either despise you or copy you. It is little use teaching your children to say their prayers if they never see you pray. It is little use sending them to church if you never go yourselves. You need not think to stop them from using bad language, if they hear oaths from your lips. You need not try to check their tempers if you let your own run loose. Make up your minds what you want your children to do and to be; and then try your best, with God's help, to do and be that yourselves. The surest beginning of their right training is to make yourselves a good example to them. Go before them, go with them in all that is good. Live so that you may be able always to say to them, "Come—fol-

low me." Do not let it be that you must say to those who look to you as guides and teachers, "Go away from me,—live not as I live,—live as unlike me as you can."

A SACRED TRUST.

A HEATHEN writer has said that "there is nothing more divine than the education of children." It is indeed a holy charge, full of blessedness and full of care. There is no work for which God's help can be claimed with surer right, none for which man is more helpless by himself, none which ought to be undertaken with deeper feeling of responsibility. The Son of God was the Son of woman. He made infancy and childhood holy by those early days of His earthly life. He folded the babes in His arms, and laid His hands upon them; not only having in His heart those few little ones whom their mothers brought to Him, but all that should be born in sin and needing His healing touch. By this act He pledged Himself the friend and Saviour of each child. He said that it was not His Father's will that one little one should be lost. He promised that no least act of kindness done to the feeblest for His sake should be forgotten or unrewarded. He spoke in awful words of the doom which God's jealous love would bring down on any who should offend a little one, by leading him away from his Saviour or tempting him to sin.

Few of us have any clear remembrance of the way in which we felt and thought in our early days. Few try to get the confidence of children so as to understand them. Few think it worth while to watch and study them. It is taken for granted that their feelings, like their thoughts, are not very deep, and are not of much importance. And we think of them in crowds, hardly at all as beings, each one of whom is forming his character and taking his course, fixing how he is to go on by himself in an endless life.

True indeed, parents have special thought for their own children; but their love does not perhaps often take the form of earnest, solemn care how to do the best for each child, learning as far as possible its disposition and needs, and working on a clear plan towards a clear end.

Christ forgot nothing. Before Him was each thought that rose in His infant mind, each feeling that made Him smile or weep, as He lay in His mother's arms. He could recall the changing look of the world around Him, and His changing thoughts about Himself as His understanding opened. So He was no mere kind friend to those children who one by one were laid in His careful arms. He was in full sympathy with each, meeting what He saw in the tender minds and hearts before Him with what was still so fresh and real within Him from the days of His own childhood. And making Himself one with each, He felt the untold worth of all that bore on the long ages of the life on which it had entered. He knew its special power of feeling joy or pain; He looked on through the hard earthly course and foresaw the need of help, to keep it safe and lead it forward to a higher purer state. No wonder that He spoke strongly; and we who feel the importance of what bears on our own good, must feel awed as we think of those guileless ones around us, each with such infinite possibilities for good or evil, each with its mystery of feeling, and its unending future.

What a trust God gives to those who have the care of one such priceless being! How high the privilege of bringing it to the Saviour and rearing it as one whom He has blessed and made His own. Those who are true and in earnest need not fear; for God will help them. He will give them wisdom, and use them for the holy ends of His love. But how great the sin of those who fail through want of heart or thought. How heavy a curse do they bring down who destroy a child's trust by leading him wrong, who give him no help or warning among his many dangers, who leave him to his own weakness and his soul's foes! A child naturally has faith in its parents, and fol-

lows their lead. Often he learns that their example is bad after that example has made him bad. To neglect to teach and strengthen a child's moral and spiritual nature, so that he may live righteously and godly, is as cruel as to neglect to feed and clothe him. To let the evil in him grow wild, and seek for him no help against those who would destroy his soul, is as cruel as it would be to stand by while flames caught his cradle.

How many have been brought back from sin by memories of a praying mother! How many have been saved from growing cold and hard in a cold hard world, by thought of their childhood's home, and of words and looks of those who knew not, when they passed to a higher life, the holy power of the influence which they left with those whom they loved and prayed for!

NURSE HIM FOR ME.

THE parents of a new-born child ought to be very glad and thankful. They cannot but be, also, full of careful thought, even almost of dread, unless they are quite heartless, or very strong in faith. They have been the means of bringing the child into being: but they cannot put it out of being. It must live on. What unknown good or evil is before it, on earth and beyond! How many things great and small will help to form its character and fix its lot!

Those who think will know their task too great for them, and will ask how they can put their child into God's hands.

Of course they will pray that they may be made wise, and that what they do for their child may have God's blessing on it. But they look for some means, over and above—some pledge of God's good-will, which they can claim in some way that God has taught. The Jews brought their children to God on the eighth day, that

they might be given a place in God's Church, and a sure part in the good things stored in it for their use. So it is now, when God has come more near to man, and blesses in more loving ways. Christian parents learn that of such as their child is the kingdom of heaven—that it can enter that kingdom by being born of water and the Spirit. So in faith and obedience they wait on God: the words are said and the acts are done which the Giver of Grace has taught. They know that the child is born from above, gifted with a new life from God through Christ. The outward signs tell of what the unseen God does to the child's unseen soul.

Baptism is no bare form; it is a real inward work of God. If we trust the true One, we are as sure of the spiritual blessing which the Bible tells us comes to the soul, as we are of the outward sign which we see and hear. Something is done and pledged to the child, because of which those who love it must thank God and take courage. It is "baptized into Christ," brought into union with Him, and so made God's child, with a share in the rights and hopes of God's Church.

No needless time should be lost in bringing a child for this great gift. Man's law orders that it be soon entered at the Registry Office among the human beings born in the country. God's law in the Church, as well as care for its soul, orders that it be soon reckoned among those born into the household of God.

The parents should bring their child to God with a right feeling of the seriousness of what they do. They should try to find sponsors likely to care for its soul, and to help them in bringing it up for heaven.

Father and mother should both come to church. It seems strange that this should need to be said. But, too often the father stays at home; sometimes even the mother is so unmotherly as to send the baby by the hand of a neighbour. Surely those who must give account to God for the child's soul ought to let nothing keep them away when it is solemnly given to God, and the Church's prayers are offered for it. Surely those whose duty will

be to guide and train the child in a Christian life ought to be able to look back on its baptism for their warning and encouragement.

Parents should read over the baptismal service before they come to church, and if necessary ask their clergyman to explain it. So they will be able to join in it with mind and heart, and will not be like many who stand during the service as if they were deaf and dumb, and neither understood it nor cared about it. The passages of Scripture and the exhortations are full of God's teaching. The questions asked are most solemn, and are meant to be answered. The promises which the sponsors make in the child's name tell of the way of plain Christian duty, in which the father and mother are bound before God to lead their child.

When a child is born the care of it begins: so when it is new-born the parents receive it from God as a solemn trust. The natural life and the spiritual life alike need care and nourishment, or they will not thrive. The Church is careful not to give the grace of baptism without some assurance that the baptized shall be taught what he ought to know, and shall be brought up as a Christian. So she provides that others besides the father and mother shall have a care for each child. If the parents die, or neglect their duty, then the godparents must do their part, as far as they are able, for the child and for God.

It is a good plan for fathers and mothers, now and then, to read over the baptismal service. This will remind them of what God has done and will do, and of what He expects them to do. They will look on their child in a new way, if they remember that he is God's child, whom they have to guard from sin, and educate for heaven. They will be warned to go carefully themselves in the path their child should go. They will be reminded of the danger of that path, and of the sure help always ready.

It is not the Church's fault that people forget what God has done for them, and claims from them. The world would soon have a new look if the Church's good rules were followed, if parents would give their children's

souls half the care they give their bodies, if they would teach them their Christian privileges and their Christian duties.

UPSIDE DOWN.

"NO one could have a better example set him." These words were not said of a child carefully brought up, and taught to look on his father as the model of all that was good and high and to be imitated. They were said of a middle-aged man; and the example which laid so great a responsibility upon him, but which he failed to follow, was that of his young children.

His wife was grieving over the way in which he wasted time, health, and money, and threw away hope for this life and the next. She spoke, as a true wife should, not hardly, but in sorrow, more for him and for his children than for herself. And she only spoke of faults that were well known to all that knew him. The friend who sympathised with her tried to comfort her by dwelling on the help God gave her, and the blessing that she had in the conduct and the promise of her children. She spoke with deep thankfulness of all that the children were, and said that it was indeed strange that their father should be what he was, "for," she added, "no man could have a better example set him."

What a turning of things upside down this was! The children found it hard not to look down on their father. They saw in him, not a pattern of what they ought to be, but a warning of what they must take care not to be. The only way in which he served them was by making the sins which degraded him hateful to them.

The father saw in his children those who were above him, living in the favour of God and man, caring for the things which are pure and honest and lovely and of good report. Their lives and characters were a continual re-

proach to him. He was forced to honour them. He knew that they could not honour him.

In many homes it is so. He who wrote "Train up a child in the way he should go," might alter his words and say to the children, "Train up your father and your mother in the way that they should go. Teach them what you have learned. Set them an example, that they may follow you, as you follow in the way where God leads you."

SONS OF GOD.

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."—*Gal.* iii. 27.

WE are said to be made God's children by adoption and grace. This means that God, of His Own free love and mercy, is pleased to take us into His family, and give us a share in the good things of His home. We know what adoption is. We are not adopted by our own fathers and mothers; we are their children by nature. We have a claim on them from the fact that we are born of them, and they are bound to do for us a parent's part. But suppose that a rich man chose to befriend an orphan child and take him into his house, and treat him as if he was his own son, he would be said to "adopt" him. God indeed does more for us when He adopts us. For a man can only call the child of another his own child, and treat him as if he was his own child. He cannot make him his own by giving him his nature. But God, when He calls us His children, makes us be indeed what He calls us. When He adopts us we are in a true way born of God. We are joined by Divine power to the holy Nature of Jesus Christ. The life of God passes into us, and we are able to say "Our Father," knowing that we are in plain fact made God's children. We are chosen out of the world,

that we may grow up like Him who has chosen us, and may learn what will make us fit to be His heirs.

When a rich man adopts a poor child and treats him as his son, he expects him to live as his son ought, and to treat him as a father. If the child slights his friend, and is untruthful and wilful, if he shows low tastes and falls into bad company, if he will not learn, or try to be made fit for his new position, the rich man will soon tire, and will let the boy go back to the state from which he seems to have no wish to rise. He will not force gifts or honours on him. He will not risk his own name by giving it to one who would only load it with disgrace.

And so in a like way, though we are adopted by God, we may be in the end no better off. If we do not care for our great hopes, they will be taken away. If we drag our Father's Name down with us to dishonour, He will put us from Him and disown us. God is very patient, and bears long, and tries to win us to seek our true joy and good. He does all but force us to gain in full all the gifts and wealth that He has for His sons. When they become prodigals and go away and waste what He has given, still He marks their path, and seeks them out in love and pity, and tries to lead them home again, and waits ready to pardon and restore. But God is not mocked, and His sons may of their own choice cast off His control and scorn His love, and so lose for ever the portion which His love gives to those who grow up into His likeness in loving obedience to His will.

HE PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS.

IN the eighth chapter of the Acts we read of the meeting of St. Philip with the Ethiopian Treasurer. The 36th verse tells us of the question, "See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" How did he know anything about baptism with water? What made him wish

and ask to receive baptism? As he returned from worshipping at Jerusalem he was reading the book of the prophet Isaiah, longing for some man to guide him to the true meaning of what he read. St. Philip drew near, having been sent by the Spirit to bring him the needful help. "He preached unto him Jesus." The preaching of Jesus it was that taught him about baptism. It might seem strange that any of that short time of high privilege should be spent thus—that a teacher sent specially by God should be stopped in his preaching of Jesus to minister an outward rite. It is quite plain that St. Philip dealt only with matters of the first importance, that all he preached was "Jesus." He did not merely tell the facts of Christ's work, showing how they fulfilled God's promises and met man's hopes. Doubtless he preached the Gospel, adding our Lord's own words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To tell of a Saviour was not enough, he told also of the means by which those who believed in that Saviour might be brought into a "state of salvation." He spoke of union with Christ, of being baptized into Him and putting Him on. *Gal.* iii. 27. St. Philip must have done all this, else his disciple could not have known how to claim his part in Jesus, or have wished thus to act in consequence of what was preached to him.

There is no rivalry between Christ and His Sacraments. There is none between the means of grace and the Source of grace from which those channels are filled. The outward parts are so common and helpless in themselves that our thoughts cannot stop at them, our faith cannot rest in them. We must think of Him who has appointed them and gives them power. Naaman the Syrian had no higher thoughts of Jordan as a stream of water after he was healed than before: but he had a sure faith in the God who used those waters as means by which His power worked. The man whose eyes were opened when he washed in the pool of Siloam, glorified not the pool, but Him who sent him there and gave the waters their virtue. The multitudes who were fed with the five loaves

were led to wish to make Him a King whose hands had blessed that food. So we prize the Sacraments, because that in them we find Jesus who is preached to us. He chooses to bless us through the means of outward things, just as He makes known His Truth by the words we read and hear. We know not how to approach Him till He tells us. We honour Him when we prize what He is pleased to use to carry His gifts to us, and to give us ways of meeting Him.

St. Philip spoke of Baptism when he "preached Jesus." The doctrine of that Sacrament is part of the doctrine of Jesus. When we tell of the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, we "preach Jesus." That is one chief way by which He comes to dwell in His people as their Saviour, and receives them to dwell in Him. When we come to that Sacrament we "come to Jesus."

CHILDREN OF GOD.

THE great blessing of the Incarnation is that we "receive the adoption of sons." God might have sent mercy to us, and treated us as sons and daughters, without indeed joining us to Himself. But this was not enough for the love of God. He would have us bound to Him, not only as receivers of His mercy, but as sharers in His life. He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, born in our nature; so we have power to become the sons of God not only in name but in reality. God does not call us what we are not; He makes us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, what He calls us. So in the Collect for Christmas Day we specially thank God for having made us His children by adoption and grace. We can be regenerate, because there is One in whose life we can have a share. God has come in human nature that we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature. Christ appears in human fashion that we may be fashioned into the likeness of His glorified humanity.

The words "children of God," or "sons of God," are used with different meanings. First, they speak of that state of privilege into which we are adopted when, coming by our own faith or brought by the faith of the Church, we are given a place in the family of a heavenly Father. We cannot make ourselves the children of earthly parents, nor can any thinking or feeling of our own make us children of God. That is God's act. St. Paul writes, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." *Gal.* iii. 27. Born from above, born of water and of the Spirit, we are given union with God through Christ, and we put on the nature of Him to whom the Holy Spirit joins us.

But we may be unworthy to be called God's children; we may sell our birthright, like Esau, that profane person; we may be prodigals; we may be like those who were "of Israel," but were not "children of faithful Abraham." If we "have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of His;" "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." *Rom.* viii. 14.

"Now are we the sons of God;" this is the beginning of all our hope. If His Spirit is leading us, and we are "purifying ourselves" by the grace of God, "working out" the salvation which has been wrought for us and given to us, then we know that we have hope. The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs of better things yet to be. Even in the "far country," if the Spirit leads us to arise and leave our sin, our hope is that we can go to One who is our Father, sure that the same fatherly compassion which draws us homewards will meet us with a welcome.

But though now the sons of God by the new birth, and children led by the Spirit of our Father, we are not yet "sons of God" in the high sense of having grown into the likeness of the Only-begotten. We may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory," but the final "change" is still before us: we shall "see" Him in whom we now believe, and with our purified spirits clothed with a body

"like unto His glorious body," we shall be "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

"PARTAKERS OF THE INHERITANCE."

THE Kingdom of Heaven is the Church of God. Christ is King over it. He fixes the way to enter it, and to stay in it. He makes its laws. He rewards the faithful subjects, and punishes or casts out the unfaithful. There is only one Church: part of it is fighting and suffering and being trained on earth; part is at rest in Paradise; part is in glory in Heaven.

To be an inheritor of that Kingdom is a high dignity. It is to be a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. It is to be in union with those who are in the light of God's presence, where there is no night, or shadow of ignorance or sin or sorrow. It is to have a real share and right in all the good things which God has prepared for those that love Him. We have not now in full the joys of that Kingdom, nor the free use of all that God makes ours. We are not yet fit to be trusted with so much: we need to be trained and taught, and to grow up in wisdom and in power. We are like children, born to high estate, who are under tutors and governors till we reach full age; but who have all provision made out of our inheritance, to educate us for the time when "our portion of goods" may be safely given up to our control. We have now as much as is good for us of the blessings and privileges of the Kingdom. They can be enjoyed and felt to be real and precious, more and more, as we make use of them, and draw nearer to the fulfilment of our hope. Unless we prize and turn to account our present privileges, the inheritance in the future can never be gained. We may sell the birthright; we may waste our substance in a far country, and never return to our Father.

We are "heirs of God" because we are "children." How

is it that we are children? Is it because we think and feel and act in certain ways? Surely not; this may prove that we know our relation to our Father; but it does not make that relation. It may prove that we act as children; but it does not make us children. We are shown to be the sons of God when we are led by the Spirit of God; by whom we were baptized into Christ, and we put on Christ. When we were made members of the Only-begotten, then it was that we were made partakers of the Divine Nature, and so, in very truth, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

Our part is now to see that we do not despise our birthright, or think scorn of the good which our Father has in store for us; but live as those who have been called to a high place of spiritual dignity, which leads on to a state higher and more glorious still.

BETHLEHEM AND NAZARETH.

SOME think of Christ as if He only came into the world that He might die. Some think of Him only during the three years of teaching and wonder-working which He ended on the Cross. A great many forget the work which by His Divine power He carries on now in heaven and in His Church on earth. But He is most forgotten in the years before His public ministry began. Few there are who do not miss much of what the childhood and the private life of Jesus of Nazareth are meant to teach. The example of the perfect Man, the miracles of the Divine One, the sacrifice of the Saviour, ought not to hide from thought and heart those thirty years.

Christ did not come only to have a human nature in which He might die; for then He might have appeared in full strength, and laid down His life at once. He did not come only to heal and teach; for that He did during but one eleventh part of His time on earth. He was born

an infant, He grew up as a child and a young man, He reached full age; that in all the way of our life, from first to last, we might be able to feel that He had gone before us, and could be with us in a real sympathy. He made infancy and youth and manhood holy; not only by being a perfect example, but by being in human nature a power of grace for them all.

A little child can be taught to love the holy Child who was born in a manger, carried to Egypt, watched over by His happy mother and the angels. He can be led to think of Jesus, who is God, keeping still within Him the thoughts and feelings of His pure child's soul, and drawn fondly to those who are entering on the life which He knows so well.

A boy may picture the true, brave, pure life of the noblest, manliest Boy that ever sought His heavenly Father's house, or showed a loving will to bend to His mother's wishes. He may have before him that Pattern of honour and high-mindedness, he may live with Christ beside him, and be sure of His sympathy and help in all his boyish duties, and in the thoughts of hope and of awe that rise within him when he looks on to coming years.

And as life grows more earnest and real to the young man, he can learn the virtues of modesty, and patience, and of true ambition to fill well his place among men, from Him whose Man's nature was called to the grandest charge and the most honourable conflict. Each lowly task and duty, even in the most unknown life, is made great if it be done in the spirit of, and as if along with, the Carpenter of Nazareth. There is no such thing as a low or mean employment, if it be that which duty sets, and for which the example of Christ gives the spirit and the power. It is not what men do, but how they do it; not what place they fill, which makes them high or low in the sight of God.

Christ remembers the days of His flesh, and He does not forget or hold aloof from those who pass their days beset with trials like those which He bore. From the beginning to the end of man's life He is a Presence and a

Strength to rouse the spirit and brace the energies of those for whom He lived and died.

A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY.

AFTER service, one evening, a working man, father of a family, wished to speak to the clergyman. He told him that he had been set thinking by a sermon which he had heard, some time before, and that after careful reading and much thought, he had made up his mind to be baptized.

The clergyman asked him whether it was quite clear that he had not been baptized in infancy, and told him to make all sure by going to see his parents. After a few days the man came again, and said "Well, sir, I've been to my father and mother, and they tell me that I was neither baptized nor christened, for when I was born there was no such thing about."

"No such thing about!" This was the state of things among the working people of one of our great towns. Children were born into the world, and there was no knowledge, even, of any way in which those newly launched upon life might be put formally under God's care; no thought of supernatural gifts with which they might set forth upon their course, strengthened and armed.

The parents, who found an immortal being dependent on their care, did not ask in what way they might seek God's help for their child's weakness, or whether God had promised any blessing and pointed out the means by which that blessing might be claimed. God's words are as plain about baptism as about anything else. The need of being born of water and of the Spirit, is as clearly taught as the need of faith and obedience. The way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Church of God, is told us in plain words. We came to our place in the world by

natural birth: we come to our place in the Church by the new birth of the Spirit; the outward means and sign of which is baptism with water in the name of the Holy Trinity. So the Bible says, and we must take the Bible as it is. From God came the gifts and grace which our souls need; we must thankfully take what we need, as He sees well to give. We must ask in what way He tells us to come to Him, not ask why He has chosen to use certain means instead of others.

"Neither baptized nor christened." Here was a mistake, and a very common one. Some people think that a child is "baptized" when the Sacrament is administered in private, and "christened" when it is administered in church. Some, again, speak of private baptism as "Christening" and say that a child who has not been brought to church is "half baptized." To be baptized is to be christened, and to be christened is to be baptized. Every baptized person is christened or made a Christian; that is, he is received into the Christian Church, and has the grace given to him which will enable him to live as a Christian. A person is either baptized or not baptized. A child that has been christened at home in sickness is as much baptized as he ever can be; he only needs to be brought to church to be solemnly and publicly received. God is thanked for what He has done. The sponsors acknowledge the child's responsibility, and undertake to bring it up as a Christian; and the prayers of the Church are offered up that it may live as a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the blessings and the hopes which God gives His children in His Kingdom.

GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS.

WHAT is the use of godfathers and godmothers? So people are always asking; and it must be owned that most of them are of no use whatever. Whose fault

is this? I say at once, Not the fault of the Church, which provides that children shall have sponsors. The fault is in those who take an office for which they are unfit, and the duties of which they have no intention of even trying to fulfil, even if they care to ask what the duties are. Parents are first to blame. They choose sponsors, perhaps because they are relations or neighbours or friends, or people who have money to give presents, hardly at all with any thought of the child's soul. Of course those who are godless themselves cannot be expected to make others godly; and they know that they are not asked to "stand," as the word is, with the view of being any help to the child on its way towards heaven. There is only one thing more sad than the way parents choose sponsors, and that is the way they often act themselves. They bring children to be baptized just as they would bring them to have their hair cut. They like to have them "done," as they express it, sometimes with a thought of making their legal rights safe; sometimes because they think baptism a more decent way to have a child "registered." But they don't even try to learn what baptism means; they pray no prayer before or after. They look for no good to come to the child. They never think of any grace or gift that needs to be taken care of.

Baptism is the beginning of the Christian life, as birth is the beginning of the natural life. When a child is born into the world his body hardly seems to live, and he knows nothing of his life; but the feeble one must be cared for, and the strength must be fed and guarded. But for the patient care of a mother, or those to whom she trusts her child, his frail life would soon fail. He would die, or grow up weak and deformed. So with the life which God gives to the child's soul, when he is brought to Him in His own way, and He is asked to make the child His, and bless him with a heavenly Father's blessing. That life seems nothing. Only little by little will it show itself. Sometimes it dies away very soon. It needs care and food and guidance. The child must be taught to call God his Father, to love Him and obey Him. He must be led to

ask Him for the daily food which his soul needs to make him strong, for the help and care which he cannot do without. The child must learn his duty to God, and how he is to gain power to do it. He must be led to long for the home above, and prize the great things of which, as God's Son, he is the heir. Everyone born into the world belongs to God, for God has made him and given him his life. He is bound to keep the vows which are made at baptism, whether he is baptized or not. All men, as creatures, are God's. They are bound to keep from what is wrong, to do what God bids them, and to believe what God tells them. When they are baptized they are bound to all these natural duties in a new and more blessed way. They are God's children, received to higher privileges, helped by greater and more special grace. They are made members of Christ, that His life may be in them, as the life of the good graft comes into the useless wild tree. They have His good nature joined to theirs, making them able to do all things and overcome the evil that is in them. It is the duty of the parents to teach their child, as soon as he can understand, what God has done for him, and what he owes to God. Hard seem, indeed, the hearts of those who will not care for those whom they have been the means of bringing into the world. Shame on those parents who never teach their children of the God who loves them; who never tell them of a Father in heaven; who let them take their chance, and lose all the blessing of the divine goodness now and for eternity! There are multitudes who act so, as there are those who make their children's lives here wretched by neglect and unkindness.

The Church does not forget those little ones whom she brings to God and blesses in His name. She knows the duties of father and mother. She does not set them aside, to put other people in their place, when she provides sponsors. The parents are bound, as a matter of natural duty, to care for their child's soul as well as body. But they may die, or they may fail in their duty of love. And so the Church provides that there should be others beside

them, who should promise to care for each child's soul, to see that he is taught his duty, his privileges, and his hope as a child of God.

This is what godfathers and godmothers are bound to do. The exhortation at the end of the service for Holy Baptism teaches it plainly. They do not bind the child to anything that it is not bound to already; they do not take the child's duty on themselves. They own in his name the rights which God has over him, when he is brought to Him for His fatherly blessing; and they promise that they will "see that the child is taught what a Christian ought to know and believe for his soul's health, and is virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life." If the parents live and do their duty, they have no responsibility but that to which charity for one another binds us all. If the parents die, or are heartless enough to leave their child to Satan, then they are bound to do all they can to save it for God.

Is it not a sad sign of the irreligion of the world, of the want of love and common kindness, that it is so hard for parents to find people who will seriously undertake the place of sponsors? Surely it is not much to do for an immortal soul, for a child brought into a world of sin by the will of others, who may be left alone by those who ought to care for him, who may owe all his hopes of heaven to the little we may be able to supply of help and prayer. What a world might this be, how unlike what it is, if the Church's system of sponsors were really carried out! How the great Christian family would be bound together by ties of love and mutual help! How the Church of God would grow, and Satan be thwarted and spoiled! Think of it. Were every child, as soon as he is born and baptized, made the special care of three persons besides its parents, did these five take a deep and real interest in his soul's well-being and growth, did they teach him as they could, and help him by prayers, what a work for God might be done! what multitudes might be trained for heaven, and made blessings to the world!

WHY DO THEY DIE?

EVERY churchyard has in it many little graves. Most mothers have learned what it is to lose a child. It is sad to think that death strikes down the greater number of those who are born, almost before they have tasted any of the joys of life. Nothing shows more plainly how sin has got hold of our nature, how the wages of sin comes surely as the due of all. Nothing shows more what a mystery sin is. We wonder why it is that so many children who have done no good or evil pine and die.

But when we think about it, we are puzzled rather with another question. Why are not more taken? Why are so many left to grow up? For, what a world of woe is this! what a world of sin it is! How mournful and tried is the lot of most who live long! How great is the danger of losing heaven, from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil! God knows what is before each; He knows all the snares and foes and griefs that wait for it in life. Surely it is not hard to understand the joy with which His love interferes to take it away from the evil to come. How happy for the lambs to be gathered thus early into the quiet fold! How blessed to receive the rest and joy and holiness of heaven, without having borne the toil and care and temptation of the world!

We can see at once why children are taken. We can be glad for their sakes, for we know their Father in heaven has them safe in His own bright home. There they will meet more love than could ever have been theirs below, and feel the care of a holier tenderness than that of any earthly parent. But, as we look from home to home, where children grow up to be men and women, are we not often led to ask, "How is it that God leaves them?" Why does He trust undying souls, why does He

trust even bodies and minds to such fathers and mothers as these?

There are parents who seem worse than the beasts of the field—who neglect and ill use their children, and send them out with the sad tale written on their worn faces. Lions and wolves will deny themselves and risk life for their young, but men and women will often let their children starve, and go unclothed, they will even strip the clothes from them, that they may be able to gratify their low lust for drink. Is it not a mercy when the drunkard's child is taken away, before it can understand the meaning of the words its parents use, and learn either to scorn them or grow like them, or realise their dishonour.

Children have minds as well as bodies; and yet how many parents there are who leave them to grow up untaught. A little self-denial would, perhaps, give their children a good education; but they will not take the trouble to send them to school. The comfort and help of knowledge is kept from them, they can do little in this life, they are shut out from much that would guide them in preparing for the next.

But the truth that there is another world is the truth that frightens us when we look at children, and at those who have the care of them. Many a father and mother, who are anxious to show love to their children, and to put in their way all that might be of use to them in this life, treat them as if they had no souls. They never show in their own words or deeds any thought of God and His Love. They do nothing to warn their children of Death, and Judgment, and Eternity. Perhaps they send them to Sunday-school and church, but they do not teach them themselves. Nor do they try in any way to show an example of religion. The children never see them pray, or go to church, or give any sign of faith and love for God; so all the influence which the parents have is against God, and hinders His work. The children do what their parents do, as soon as they are old enough. Many a child will be, in the place of the lost, his father's or mother's chief accuser. Many a one will say there, "Would God

I had died before my father or my mother led me in the path that has ended here!"

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

CHILDREN are born into a world of sin, and there is evil in themselves. We know the danger in which their souls are, from temptation and from their own readiness to be tempted. How are they to be helped? Who can help them? God, we are sure can, and is willing. God loves them; and He wills to take them under His care, and give them power to live as His children. He has taught us how to bring them to Him, and put them into His Fatherly hands. Parents show faith in God when they obey His word, and claim Baptism for their children, and see in Christ's Sacrament the sign and pledge of an unseen work wrought by the Holy Spirit. Then they feel that, in the way God has told them, they have waited for His help. They can begin with new hope the work of training up their children as children of a heavenly Father, as sharers of the life of Jesus, as heirs of the eternal kingdom.

They can begin in hope, but they must go on in earnest care. For, as with the life of the body, so with the life which God gives to the soul. It may grow weak, it may die; it needs nourishment, it is threatened by many things that may harm and destroy it. A member of Christ may be a "branch in Him that beareth not fruit:" a child of God may be a prodigal, and leave and forget his Father: an heir of heaven may waste his substance and sell his birthright. Well indeed may parents watch over and guard with fear those whom they have been the means of bringing into this bad world, and to whom they have handed down a frail fallen nature. They must by all prayers and teaching and example seek to weaken the evil in them, and make the good strong.

For a while children may be sheltered from much harm; but soon they are of an age when they must go out to face the fight of life. They have more of their own way, and must choose and act for themselves. Now there is new danger; they need new help. Of course there are means of grace and ways of drawing power from God, which they, as well as all others, may use. But there is a special means ready for their special need. They are bidden to come to Confirmation, that in it they may seek and gain the "firmness," the courage, the power, the armour of righteousness, without which their fight cannot be fought well. Those who seek God's strength in this way do not draw near because they are strong, but because they feel weak, and know their need, and long for what they have not of their own. They claim what God has ready for all who will have and use it. They kneel in lowliness and faith, wishing to be true soldiers, and asking God to make them so. He who has the right spirit in which to come will look up to heaven, saying—"I am bound to overcome sin, to believe firmly, to live holily; I am weak, I cannot by myself. Lord, Thou art strong and good. Give me strength as Thou knowest I need it. Make me more willing and more able. Let me be steadfast, strong in the Lord, faithful unto death."

DAY SCHOOLS.

WHERE the spiritual part of man is rightly educated, the education of the other part will be felt to be a solemn duty, and will not be neglected. So we find that religion has always given the first impulse to the work of education. The Church has taught the world the claims of the poor as well as of the rich. Whence came all those splendid institutions for the education of the poor which the world has in most cases managed to grasp for the benefit of the rich, and to separate from religion? Were not

the founders men who loved their brethren for God's sake, and sought to make them wise for time and eternity? Whence came the schools in which the children of the poor in every parish of the country found opportunities of education? Were they not distinctly religious works, founded and mainly supported by the clergy and faithful laity of the Church? Of late the growth of population has outstripped the efforts of the Church, and the world has been roused to help to meet the demand of the people for education. What the Church did quietly the world is doing with much boasting and self-exaltation. Indeed it might be supposed that there was no education in the country till a few years ago, and that all that has been done since that time has been done in what are called "Board Schools." We are thankful for Church-school work, because there is a guarantee, more or less good, that education in religion will not be neglected, and there is proof that the Church knows how the cultivation of the intellect prepares for the welcoming of the Faith.

We have no word to say against Board Schools, as such. There is, however, danger of the children being made a bone of contention between rival political parties, whose motives are merely selfish. There is danger of the work of education getting into the hands of men, who are elected merely as nominees of a political clique, not at all from their fitness; who either know something of education and nothing of those to be educated, or know something about the poor and very little about education. And there is the danger of the schools being carried on upon the principle that there is no certain religious truth, and that even the existence of God must be treated as an open question. Surely the facts of the Gospel history are as important as the facts of Ancient Roman or Grecian history. Surely the life of Christ has had more influence on the fortunes of the world than the life of Xerxes or Alexander. Surely it is as needful for a man, who would claim to be educated, to be able to give an intelligent account of His teaching as of the principles of the old heathen philosophers.

Many plausible things can be said by those whose theories

are against any religious teaching in rate-aided or state-aided schools; but those theories are not consistently carried out, and the theorists would be the last to wish them to be so; and the world cannot be worked except on practical principles which often violate the best established theories. It does seem sad that God is the one person against whom the children are guarded by most elaborate regulations, and that He is the only authority to whom it is unlawful for a teacher to appeal. We think it right to say grace before and after meals. Surely there is loss when that which nourishes the mind may not be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Surely there cannot be expected to be the same earnest feeling among teachers and taught as to the meaning of the work in which they are engaged. Surely there must be grave injury to the teachers in loss of religious tone, when their work is distinctly and emphatically marked as a work that has nothing to do with religion, and with which God must not dare to meddle. And a child is a most sacred thing. What more solemn charge can be entrusted to any man or woman than that of educating a child of God for life here, and for life in a world beyond which is for ever?

As a matter of fact, large numbers of the future fathers and mothers of the land are growing up with no knowledge of religion whatever. The state of multitudes who live and die around us is one of blank ignorance of the most common truths of religion. These poor people generally know their ignorance. It is to be feared that in a generation we shall be surrounded by those who will not even know that. It is easy to say that home and the Sunday-school are the proper places in which to learn religion. Those who speak thus know nothing of the homes of the poor, and nothing of Sunday-schools. How many fathers and mothers among the working people have leisure and ability to teach their children as they ought to be taught? In what Sunday-schools is the teaching so good that an hour and a half weekly is enough to educate in the deepest and longest of all subjects? The work of parents and Sunday-school teachers should be to apply to the consciences and lives of

the children what they learn from teachers trained in imparting knowledge. It is a common error to suppose that all a teacher in religion wants is to love God and be fond of children. Sometimes it is almost said that skill in teaching and love for souls do not go together. Teaching is an art that needs some natural aptitude and much long training. It seems strange that religion should be the one subject that anyone is thought competent to teach.

HOW DO WE LIVE?

THE Bible tells us that "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This is true of our bodies and of our souls. God's will and God's love do everything. In Him we live and move and have our being. This is all we know, we don't know how He keeps us alive, and makes us strong; we can only trust Him, and use His good gifts in the way He sends them: we live thus by faith.

The air we breathe is not our life. We cannot tell why water should not do the same work for us. We only know that God has willed that some of the gases of which the air is made should make a change in our blood. We don't know how or why. The food we eat strengthens us, too, only because God has so willed to give us strength. None of us can tell how bread and meat are made into hair and flesh and teeth and nails. If we said we would not take the trouble of eating till we found out that, we should soon die. We can only live by faith, by taking on trust what God gives, and using the means we have from Him without questioning. It would not be faith to say that God could keep us alive without any means, and that we would only look to Him; it would be unbelief and presumption, which would bring its own punishment.

As it is with our bodies, so it is with our souls. They can live only by God, who is their life. We cannot follow

God in all He does, and see how He gives our souls what they want. We must live by faith, by using the means He gives us, doing what He tells us humbly, and feeling sure that He will do what He promises. Of course we know nothing of the way in which Sacraments, and other means of grace, keep up and strengthen the life of our souls. We know no more than we do about the way food and drink add new flesh and blood to our bodies. But this must not keep us from using means of grace, or make us doubt the power that God puts into them. God could make our souls strong for heaven without any means; but He tells us to look for His grace through ways which He has chosen, and which don't seem, perhaps, to promise us much. He wants to keep us humble and make us remember that all comes from Him—that we live by faith in Him. So we must not expect to be made fit for heaven by thinking about God and talking about God, and saying we trust in Him, while we refuse to take the food He gives us for our souls in the Sacraments and other means of grace. We might just as well expect to be strong and healthy in our bodies by saying grace regularly, while we never took our meals.

CHRIST ALL IN ALL.

"Without Me ye can do nothing."

WHEN the Queen of England sends her ambassadors abroad, she does not part with her power; she puts it forth. When men administer justice in far-off lands with her authority, and in her name, they do not dethrone her, but maintain her rule. When they give favours out of the public purse as agents for the Crown, they do not claim gratitude for themselves, but bind the loyalty of the people.

So it is with Christ. He does not part with His power, or give His honour to another, He does not send men to act

instead of Him. He keeps all power and all glory in His own hands. He acts through and by means of men, indeed, but still He it is who acts. What is done is done by Himself. As with our bodies, so it is with our souls. Our bodies live and grow by the use of outward means, and by the help our fellow-men supply. But we live by God, who makes these means and helps of use. And our souls in like manner live and thrive and grow strong by the use of means of grace, and the help which we gain at the hands of men. But Christ all the while is the One whose power is present and active. The voice and words of a man may rouse a sleeping soul to wakeful care, or guide a wanderer, or give a sad one hope. Christ works the change, using these poor means at His will. A man may receive a child to all the blessings of which baptism is the means and the pledge. Christ is the true baptizer. He does all that is indeed of power and value. A man may give the Body and Blood of Christ to his fellow-sinner. Christ it is, indeed, whose own will and love make Him present to feed and refresh the soul which He has roused to hunger and to thirst for Him. And so it is always. Christ keeps the power and claims the glory. He uses men as His voice and hand to cheer and help our souls, as He uses them to cheer and help our bodies. With the voice of men He rouses souls to a sense of sin. With the voice of men He meets their penitence and faith with pardon. With the voice of men He calls sinners to Him. With the hand of men He gives them union with Himself, and strength and joy. The treasure of grace is His. The earthen vessels are His. He does what He wills as He wills.

OUR WAY OR GOD'S WAY.

A PERSON was very angry with some friends for going to a church which he did not like. He said a great deal, true and untrue, and then summed up all with this,

"They teach, there, that no one can be saved except he is baptized and takes the Holy Communion."

This charge was untrue; but there was as much error in the mind of the person who made it as there could have been in the minds of the persons against whom it was made, if the charge had been true. He spoke, presuming to say of how little importance the Sacraments are. He charged others with presuming to say how far God might or might not be pleased to give grace in ways of which He does not tell us.

Christ has ordained the Sacraments; they are not man's inventions. Christ has told men to come for certain gifts of grace needful for their souls, and has promised that by means of the Sacraments these gifts shall be bestowed upon those who come rightly. To think little of the Sacraments is to slight Christ's words. Those who slight His words on one subject are very likely to slight them on others. To refuse to come for His blessings in the ways He teaches is to set our own wills and notions above His will and His wisdom. It is to act as if we had a right to His bounties, and could demand them in whatever way suited our tastes or saved us trouble.

Naaman was offered healing on God's terms; as a matter of fact he was not cleansed till he had done the apparently unmeaning, useless acts of faith and obedience. So we, who have been told about Sacraments, have no right to look for the blessings promised through them, by any other means, or without means. There is a sense, then, in which it is quite true that *we* cannot be saved without Sacraments; because if we refuse them, we wilfully or carelessly disobey Christ, and we show want of faith in Him and want of desire for His grace. No one, certainly, dare say that he can be saved without Sacraments. For that is to say that he can choose which of Christ's words to obey, and that he can judge which of Christ's directions for his soul's good it is safe or unsafe to treat as of no importance.

But to teach that men must believe simply, and obey thankfully, when Christ speaks, whatever He says or bids

us do, is quite another thing from saying that God cannot and does not give grace without the appointed means. We are not judges of God, or of one another. Our part is to judge ourselves. The sins we see men guilty of may not, in God's sight, be as sinful in them as they would be in us. So men who live without the use of Christian privileges may not suffer loss as we would, who have more light. God can do what He will with His own: but God's grace is not *our* own to treat as if it could be gained and kept in our own self-chosen ways.

Why should men ask whether they can be saved without Sacraments? They do not ask whether they can live without bread, but thankfully use it to sustain their daily life. In like manner, they ought not to raise the question how far souls can live and be strong without the Sacraments. All means of which God tells must be thankfully and regularly used. For men need all, if the work of their salvation is to go on, if their souls are to be in health, if the spiritual life that is in them as the gift of God is to grow in vigour and purity by the power of His Grace.

CHRIST IN US—HOPE.

WE lost God by our sin; we went away from Him. We were without Him, far from Him. And we could not come back by ourselves. Only God's own love and help could save us from our doom. God loved on, even after we left Him. He clung to us in pity. He would not part with those whom He had made to be a joy to Him, as His happy, holy children. He sent His Son into the world to seek and save that which was lost, and in His arms of love to bring back wandering, stained, and weary men. God the Son came, full of love, glad to do and bear all things, that His Father's holy will might be done, and man might not die but live. Jesus trod the pure, true way in which we must walk, if we would get home to God. He shed

His Blood that each dark spot of sin might be washed from our souls. He rose out of the grave and went up on high, that He might plead for us there, and send down help to lead us in the safe way.

All our hope is in Him. All our help and strength come by Him. To know Him, to get near Him, to tread in His steps, to be one with Him;—this is what we have to strive for. Without Him we can do or be nothing that is good. He saves from sin, from the world, from self, from the evil one. He makes strong, and holy, and like God.

How can we draw near to Christ, and be made fast to Him? How can we have Him as our own, and be His? When we know this, we know all. We want more than to hear of Him and His works. We can rest with no less than Himself. "I will come unto you." "Ye see Me: because I live ye shall live also." Such words as these make our hearts thirst with a longing which only Christ can fill.

How are we to draw near, to find, to have, to be glad in Him? He alone can tell us, we can only learn how from His true lips. No man's own head can find out the ways of God. Christ comes to us, and bids us come in many ways. Full of blessing are the hours we spend in prayer, or in thinking of things unseen, when the world is shut out from our souls and we look away to the better land and the family above. Dear are all the means of grace to the heart that is true to Christ. But there is one which, if we take Christ at His word, we must be sure brings us nearer and binds us faster to Him than all the rest. He speaks grand things of prayer, and other helps and ways by which and in which men find God. But He uses words about the Holy Communion which belongs only to It.

Think of the time when He first gave It to His faithful ones. Think of what He did and said, and try to put the scene before you. Try to feel as the disciples must have felt, even though they did not know what we do. How wonderful and full of awe is everything! Surely, if Christ ever meant what He said, it was then. If He ever gave what was worth having, it was then. Surely, on the eve of

His death, His last gift was a most precious one, His last charge was solemn. "Take, eat, This is My Body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of Me." "This is My Blood: do this as oft as ye drink It in remembrance of Me." Who that loves the Lord and knows His love can disobey? Who that believes Him true can doubt? Even were there only what passed on that night, we could not but take Him at His word, and be sure that good things beyond thought are here. But there is far more. The disciples could look back to what He had said before—"The bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him." These words are hard to all. Many left Christ because they were hard words. The disciples waited in faith, sure that their Master spoke truth. When they heard Him speak at the Last Supper, they would say—"Now we know what He meant. Now we see the way by which we are to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. Here, He tells us, is His Body, and here is His Blood."

And when we long to be indeed one with our Lord, and ask How?—then those words come, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him." When we go on to ask how we can eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, that we may dwell in Him and have Him dwelling in us, we seem to hear those words spoken on the night of the betrayal. Christ points to the Blessed Sacrament and says—"This is My Body; This is My Blood. You cannot understand, but believe Me; sense cannot help you any more than it could help the shepherds who looked at the swaddling clothes and the baby form in the manger. But faith can help you as it helped them."

Strange that any should think they care for their Lord who let His dying charge come to them in vain. Strange that any should think they love Him while this way of coming near and being in Him is put from them. Blessed are those who have found for themselves how true Christ is to those who trust Him. No one can tell another what is the joy of knowing Christ near in His Own holy Sacrament.

Only those who have let Him in as He asks to be received can know the power of Christ living in them.

COME UNTO ME.

CHRIST calls sinners, as sinners, to come close to Him. He "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He does not tell us to wait far off till our hearts and lives are changed so as to seem less evil in the presence of His holiness. He says, "Come unto Me." He draws nigh to sinners that they may touch Him, and that the virtue that goes forth from Him may heal them. Away from Him we go on in helpless sin: only near Him can we find salvation.

Christ has told us of ways by which we can draw nigh to Him here, so as to be made fit for His Presence in heaven. The most solemn and blessed of all is the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood. We know this because His words and St. Paul's teach us plainly. No wonder that many earnest people feel as if they dare not come so near, asking so high a gift, entering on such great responsibility.

There are who hold back because they love some sin which they cannot make up their minds to part with, and they know that receiving the Holy Communion would only make their sin worse. There are who think that they are more free to live carelessly and are less bound to aim high while they are not communicants. Of course no one should ask Christ to come and dwell in him along with a loved sin: but what sin can give pleasure worth the joy and grace Christ brings with Him? What sin can give profit to make up for the soul's ruin? And there is a great mistake made about responsibility: we do not escape it by refusing what would fit us to meet it. We shall have to answer for what we could do with grace offered and refused, as well as for what we fail to do with grace received. We sin by remaining weak when we might be strong, as well as by not using

strength we have. The Holy Communion does not bind to anything more than what it gives power for; just as a man's strength does not bind to more than the power of a man, over and above that of a child, enables for. It is sin to come carelessly to Holy Communion, and it is sin to refuse to come. The only way to avoid sin is to come as Christ teaches us to come. And this we all can do; for He who bids us come will help us to come aright.

The Holy Communion is not a reward for being good: it is a means of grace to strengthen the weak and cheer the careworn. To the weary and heavy laden the invitation comes. Those who feel their burden of sin, and wish to be free to serve God, find Christ ready to dwell in them, and to make His Presence a source of power and holiness. Those who are beset by temptations, and tried sorely with the world's work and anxiety, can in this Sacrament come to be joined in union with One who will give them peace, and make all things work for their good.

We can bring no worthiness of our own. We can do no more than seek to come in penitence and faith and charity. By Penitence we forsake in heart the sins that stop the way of God's grace. By Faith we withdraw the veil of unbelief that shuts off God from us, and we cease the resistance of our will. By Charity we yield to the Divine love that it may make us live loving God and man. What less can we aim at when we join in prayer at all? How can we take part in the common services of the Church, or say our private prayers, if we are careless about repentance and faith and charity? When we say the Lord's Prayer, we profess to believe in God as our Father through Jesus Christ, we profess to forsake the sins which we ask God to forgive, and the evil from which we pray to be delivered. When we ask to be forgiven as we forgive, we profess to love even those who have done us wrong. It is indeed a solemn thing to receive the Holy Communion. Men need to be reminded that it is also a solemn thing to pray any prayer. We cannot hide from God; our only safety is with honest heart to draw nigh to Him, that He may draw nigh to us and make us what He gives us the wish to be.

GRACE, NOT REWARD.

THE thirsting pilgrim does not expect to feel refreshed till he has drunk of the cool water. The hungry do not refuse the offered bread, and starve, because they have not the strength which food gives. The sick do not leave their medicine untasted, waiting to find in themselves the improvement which the medicine is meant to work. The weary toilers do not think themselves unfit to take rest till they feel as men do who have lain down in peace and slept.

In caring for their bodily wants men do not fall into such mistakes; but in caring for their souls, unreasonableness of this sort is common. Men hold back from means of grace because they have not what the means of grace are intended to give them, and because they are not what it is the purpose of means of grace to make them. For instance, in Confirmation God offers to the weak firmness to will, and to do, and to be right; but the weak will not come, because they do not feel strong, in fact because they are the very persons who need Confirmation, and because the grace of Confirmation is the very grace they need. Again, in the Holy Communion Christ calls those who are weary and heavy laden with a load which they cannot lift off, and a task they cannot fulfil by themselves: He tells them to seek the promise, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." So He bids them come to be made one with Him, that He may uphold and refresh them. But the weary and heavy laden think sadly that they are unfit. They long for the rest which Christ gives to souls: but they feel as if they could not dare to come to Him for rest till they have got it without Him, or in some way of their own. So they stay afar off and are tempted to despair, wondering why God does not help and cheer them, while all the time they are refusing the gifts of His loving-kindness.

Often men are proud, when they seem humble; and are

half-hearted, when they seem conscientious. They will not come for grace in God's ways. They forget that they must answer for grace refused as well as for grace not used, and that added power only binds them to what it makes them able for.

Each means of grace has its own worth and effect. Commonly the grace is only to be had through its appointed means. When we use them we present the claim and plead the promise which God has given. He is always true. All He asks of us is to be true, to know what we come for, and to come trusting Him, and meaning to lay hold of and to keep and use the grace He waits to bestow. We draw near without His gifts, and in order to gain them. We draw near, not pretending to be "rich and having need of nothing," but knowing and owning ourselves "poor and blind and naked." Thus we show that we cast ourselves as sinners upon God's free mercy, and that it is grace we seek for, not reward.

A TRIAL OF FAITH.

LOOK at the Baby lying in the straw in a rude manger, wrapped in rough cloths. He is scarce able to lift His little limbs. His eyes open and look round, as if in wonder. He utters a weak cry. He stretches up His small hands in an aimless way. A poor woman lifts Him carefully, while an aged man in working dress watches over and waits on the mother and her Child. Who is this? This is God, manifest in the flesh. Men taught by heaven come in and adore Him as He lies looking no more than a helpless child. They offer Him costly gifts: they own Him as King and God. We are sure that they are right: else we know nothing of God, the Gospel is no gospel.

If we believe this, if we can adore this Child as God, veiled as He is by such a lowly form, why stop at this? Why should we doubt the truth of God's Word when it

tells us of those sacraments and means of grace by which the work of God made flesh is brought to us one by one. The words spoken at the last Supper are not strange to him who can kneel and worship in the stable at Bethlehem.

THE SAME ALWAYS.

JESUS of Nazareth was always God. He was not sometimes only man, and sometimes more than man. He did not cease to be God when those among whom He moved had not faith to know Him as God, and become God again at the call of the believing and the true. He was the same, full of Divine grace and truth in His manhood, mighty in love and power as God, whether He spoke to those who welcomed, or to those who scorned and hated Him. While the multitudes thronged and pressed Him, on the way to the house of Jairus, He was not two Christs, but one. The careless crowd and the poor woman who touched the hem of His robe and found healing touched the same Christ. He was the same, but He was not the same to them and to her. The difference was not in Him, but in those who touched Him. The virtue passed with saving power to the woman; to the others it was as if there had been no virtue to go forth.

So it is in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. He is present, whether men have faith or not: that Presence is the work not of man but of God. All receive the Sacrament, and in the Sacrament there are two parts. The worthiness of communicants does not make the Sacrament, nor does their unworthiness unmake it. All touch Christ: but the virtue that is in Christ goes out in blessing only to those who in humble faith seek for it. Some may draw near, like the throng who pressed on Christ, with no feeling of need, with no sure hold on the fact that Christ comes as a Saviour in such a lowly way,

with no longing to be saved from the sin that makes them unworthy. So they go away unhealed, unhelped, and with their unbelief stronger. Others come asking only to touch if it be but the hem of His garment; they long to be brought close to Him by any means, however trying to their faith and humility, that His Life may quicken theirs. They will not be kept back by the world's crowd, or by their own weakness. They feel in themselves the virtue of Christ meet their faith. They know that there is indeed more than eye can see, or thought explain. And the voice of their Lord calls them to linger in His Presence that they may go back to the world with the peace of God keeping them strong in faith and devotion.

REPENTANCE, FAITH, CHARITY.

WHEN we come to the Holy Communion, we must examine our repentance, our faith, and our charity. It is plain that on these three parts of preparation must depend our coming worthily, and finding the good we profess to seek. For, to come without any one of them is to forget or to be careless about the meaning of what we do, as well as the purpose of what we ask God to do and to give. We need feel no shrinking fear in drawing nigh to our Saviour, when He calls us to Him. We must be thoughtful and touched with holy awe, when we pray for such a drawing near of our God. All is well, if we are true, if with honest will we try to seek the same end which Christ seeks for us.

When we receive the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, it is in order that He may dwell in us, and that we may dwell in wonderful union with Him. We ask Him thus to come as a Saviour, to save us from sin, and to make us free and strong to live lives holy like His own. Then, of course, we are bound to take care that we wish to be saved from sin, that we long to yield our wills and

ourselves to His rule, and to use the power which He gives. We must hail His coming, as those who feel weary and heavy laden, and thirst for His pardoning, strengthening, refreshing grace.

Again, in this service we "show the Lord's death," we "do this for a memorial" of His Sacrifice once offered. We unite ourselves with the pleading work of our High Priest, who has gone into the Holy of Holies, even into heaven itself, there to appear in the Presence of God for us. So we must be sure that we truly believe in the merits of that Sacrifice, and trust in the work which our Mediator and Advocate is doing for us now.

Once more: we ask God to give us salvation for the sake of Him who died a death that our sins had a part in bringing on Him. Surely when we thus plead that our great debt be forgiven on such grounds, we trifle with God and ourselves if we willingly let any hard feeling against our neighbour have place in our hearts.

THE WORTH OF LIFE.

THE question is gravely asked whether life is worth living, whether the ills of life are not more and greater than its good things. So-called wise men, in old days, argued the same question. Some settled it in their own minds that it was better to die than to live; and they killed themselves. Now-a-days men speak about life as if it were almost all misery; and some "religious" people seem to think they show heavenly-mindedness by talking as if God gave them no good on earth. But, sad as life is said to be, men cling to it. All that they have will they give for their life, and much of their thought and money are spent in trying to prolong it.

The life that many live is not worth living. Only part of the man seems to be alive. His lower nature is active, but the mind and spirit seek none of the joys meant for

them. There is no aim before the man. His life here leads on to, and fits him for, no higher, better state. He goes on through the years, knowing nothing of the pure and wholesome pleasures within his reach, bearing sorrows which only wound and harden him, many of which are the plain fruit of his own self-chosen way of life.

But life is to be judged by what God means it to be, and what we may make it. There is good all round us, if we will look for it and learn to enjoy it. We can do much, by wise use of the knowledge and powers given us, to gain the common blessings of health and prosperity. There are pleasures safely out of reach of our worldly circumstances. We can find a use in what seems most against us. We can have a deep joy in bearing trial well, and feeling it brace and strengthen us and make us truer men. And our life here is the beginning of what goes on for ever. Now we grow to be what we shall find ourselves, when we stand before God, and He puts us in the place for which we are fit. Who need think little of the dignity of his life on earth, or fret at the way in which God sees well to shape and train him? Let him but "love God," and "all things shall work together for his good"—making him good, and preparing him to enjoy good that is perfect and everlasting.

NOTHING TO LIVE FOR.

"I HAVE given all up." "There is nothing to live for here." Sayings of this sort are very common. People speak them in a pious tone, and they are thought to be sure signs of grace. From some lips, and in a certain sense, they may be so. Most often they prove the soul blind, ungrateful, and without the fear of God. Men sometimes "give all up" because all has given them up. They sullenly, or in despair, or in dull weariness, let go what they cannot keep. They make up their minds to what

must be. It is well to hold loose to earthly things, if the heart holds fast to things in heaven. There is no use in ceasing to love the world, unless in order to be free to love what is better, or because better things draw the love away. To give up hope of good here does not show that there is hope for heaven. As well might it be said that a man who makes up his mind that a ship is going down under him is therefore safe to reach the land.

"There is nothing to live for here" can hardly at all be spoken in any sense which is not untrue and sinful. There is a great deal to live for here. God does not mean us to be sad, or to pass our days in gloom. The world is full of signs of His good care. All men have much joy. Most of our grief comes from loss of joys, or from our wrong use of them. It is unthankful to deny the bounty of Him, who sends so many gifts to bless and brighten His children's path. And besides the blameless pleasures of life, what noble and high work we have to do for now and for eternity. There is an end in all we do, in every step of our way, in every thing that touches us. We are living for a life to come, which shall not end. Have we no help to bring to those round us, by our words and deeds and prayers? Can we make the world no brighter and purer? Can we cheer no sad heart, can we guide no straying one, can we help no light heart to shun what would make it heavy? Nothing to live for? We have angels' work to do, angels' glory to win, if we only will.

Have we no God to serve? He put us here, and He keeps us here. Surely He does not mean us to live in vain, and waste to no good end the gifts and powers He trusts us with. All our least tasks done well, all our least cares borne well, all are part of His great plan. What He gives us to do is what He wants done. In our lone path when no one takes note of us, in our life, it may be of pain and sickness, we may have a work to live for, which God counts as great as that which angels do.

Have we no nature to make pure, no will to train, no soul to fit for life with God, no love to make all God's own? The Holy Spirit tires not of pleading with us, and working

in us. Why should we tire, and fret that we are left here, as it seems for no good end? Each day ought to leave its mark on us, and bring us up more high on our climb towards God. Each day ought to tell of growing knowledge and power, of battles won, of graces gained. Each day ought to bring us more near to being able to say, "It is finished."

It is no good to be ready to leave this world, unless we are ready for the next. To find out that this world, without God, is no place of rest, gives a man no hope of rest beyond. Those who are without God here may not hope to be with Him hereafter. A calm "resigned" death may only prove that the soul is dead before the body. To count God's earthly gifts and His grace worthless gives no promise of reaching His glory in heaven. To say that there is nothing to live for here shows that the meaning and aim of life are not understood. God put us here and God keeps us here. As long as we live He upholds us. He gives us blessings which He means us to enjoy and be thankful for. He gives us work which He means us to feel the greatness of, as a work bearing on eternity. He gives us objects of faith and hope to lead our love towards higher things than any on earth. For these He bids us live while here. Day by day He fills our hearts with joy and gladness. There is much to cheer and help us, much to make us sure that we are our Father's care. We are trusted with noble work. We are being trained and fitted for an inheritance of glory.

GOOD HEATHENS; BAD CHRISTIANS.

SOMEONE has said, and said well, that to be a good Christian a man must first be a good heathen. St. Paul told the Christians of Rome, who thought they had much to boast of, that the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen through them. They did not in their

lives reach even the level of well-doing at which the heathen aimed. So the heathen scorned them, and were prejudiced against the religion that left their morality so low. Our Lord warned His followers that, except their righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter His kingdom. And He reminded those who only loved those who loved them, and did good to those from whom they received good, that there was no sign of true religion in this; for the heathen who worshipped false gods, and those who owned no claim of any god, did as much.

Many heathen indeed felt that far more than this was man's duty; and they did far more. In the writings of men who lived in ages that we call dark, we find teachings about truth and generosity and self-respect and purity, which, if acted on in England, would in a short time change the whole look and character of society.

Their lives often showed how strongly the light first given to man still struggled to guide and ennoble him, and how faithfully some men used the talents that they had. It would indeed be well if all who are Christians in name had the high principles of these men, and acted on them as honestly. But yet no man may be content with himself, because he thinks that he lives in some ways as truly and purely as men did who never even learned the truth and gained the grace which the Jews had. It is not much for a baptized Christian to aim as high as the better class of heathens. It is not enough for him to live no higher, holier life than a faithful Jew. Christians have a union with God which was not given to any until the Holy Spirit came, sent by Christ to make men members of Him. More is given to men now, more grace is within their reach, for the taking of which and using of which, God says He will make them render an account.

If the common, easy-going notion about religion be true, Christ need not have come and lived and died, and risen and ascended, and given the Holy Spirit. All the great work of Redemption was not done merely to make men tell the truth, and pay their just debts, and keep from sin on

which the world cries shame. To do this is only to live like a decent heathen. He who does not do this, and more, is a bad man. He who does this, and no more, is not proved to be in any way a good Christian. Cornelius the centurion, of whom we read in Acts x., was able to "fear God and work righteousness," and be "accepted," though his knowledge of God was very imperfect. How can those who have been given the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ hope to be accepted, on the ground that they keep from some forms of unrighteousness, while their wilful self-confidence shows that they have no true fear of God. The heathens whom we are tempted to scorn, but who use well what has been given them, shall rise up in the Judgment and condemn many a self-satisfied "Christian," who wastes his Lord's goods, and leaves his precious talents buried and unprofitable.

DEPART FROM ME.

THESE words were spoken by Simon Peter, when he saw the miracle of which we read in the beginning of the fifth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. St. Peter knew much of his Master, but now he felt as if the truth of His greatness and glory had flashed on him for the first time. He was in the presence of God, who could see the depths of his heart, and do with him what He would. He felt the nearness too much for him; he felt unfit for it. Like Job, he might have said, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, therefore I abhor myself."

But St. Peter did not wish his Lord to go. He was ready to leave all to follow Him. He spoke like the centurion, who felt unworthy that Christ should come under his roof. He would have "followed afar off," but still he clung to Him, for we are told he fell down at Jesus' knees. Thus he owned his unworthiness, and showed his longing to be worthy. Christ said to him, "fear not," and give him the

promise that he should not only be with Him, as a learner, but should lead others to a knowledge of the truth, bringing them out of the storms of the world into the quiet shelter of the Church. Not long after, St. Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

God comes near to us in Christ. We can look on God and live. Nay, only by coming to Him, and drawing near in faith and love, can we have life. But men shrink away. Some say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." They do not wish to feel the nearness of God. It would hinder them in their path of sinful gain or pleasure. Their whole life is a putting away of the Good Physician and the kind Shepherd. At last all is away but God. Face to face with the Judge they stand, and hear Him say, "Depart from Me."

Some again are like our first parents. They think to hide from God. They close their eyes against His truth: they shut their ears against what He says. They try to drown thought by plunging into the world's work or joy. But God is, and is near, whether we look to and listen to Him, or not. The voice, "Where art thou?" "What hast thou done?" sooner or later all must heed.

Some are like St. Peter. They have long followed Christ, but some startling call, or some strong working of the Spirit, makes them feel the reality and awfulness of God and of their sin. Their closeness to Him frightens them. They feel as if they must withdraw a space till they are less unfit for the privileges they have been long using with too small care and lowliness. To such Christ says, "Fear not. Now that you know Me, and yourselves, I can make you by Mine own grace worthy of Me."

There are others who seem to think they are safer away from Christ than near Him. They take care to make no profession, to use no means of grace. They say that they could not live as Christians, and must not "make a mock of it." But there is hope only for those who "come to" and "abide in" and "follow" Christ. What greater wrong to Him than to treat Him as one who calls men,

only to put them in new danger, and who is not ready to help those to whom He gives responsibility? Men without number act in this way, ever saying to Christ, "Depart from me; it is dangerous to have anything to do with Thee. It is more safe to perish as a stranger, than to take the place Thou dost offer near Thee." But many who cannot quite do this are yet in as real an error. They pray, they go to church; but they shrink back when Christ comes near and shows Himself as the giver of great gifts in the higher means of grace, such as Confirmation or Holy Communion. They say, "I could not live up to it; depart from me; come not so near as that. Let me live a Christian life, indeed, but farther off than that would bring me." Does this mean, "I am not willing to try to live as a close follower; I am not wholehearted in my service?" Then, of course, all the religion is vain. Does it mean doubt of Christ's care, and of the grace He says is ready? Then, is not this doubt sin? He calls everyone to come near. And when He draws men to Him, He ever gives the grace to fit them for each higher place and greater work.

The prayer of a true and earnest disciple must be, "I am a sinful man, O Lord; depart not from me, for Thou art holy, and alone canst make me holy. Bring me close to Thee, that I may know my sin and Thy goodness more truly. Make me pure and true in heart, that I may see Thee, and that Thy likeness may be formed in me here, and that I may become fit to dwell with Thee for ever."

WASHED FIRST.

A CLERGYMAN was catechising about the parable of the wedding garment. One of the children held up her hand, and when encouraged to speak, said, "Please, Sir, wasn't he washed first?" The child thought of a man, brought in with the crowd gathered of every kind

from the highways and hedges. She felt that something more would be needed than simply putting on a dress, and she felt that he would probably not be fit to have the beautiful wedding garment put on him as he was. So she asked, "Wasn't he washed first?"

There was wisdom in the child's words, wisdom which many who think themselves wise in religious matters need to learn. We hope to have a place at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We look forward to the time when "His Wife shall have made herself ready," and He shall come to take her to Himself. That perfect union of Christ with His Church, in the end of this age, is what heaven and earth are looking forward to. Each of us is bidden. We may make light of it, and go our ways, seeking what seems now more pressing. Or we may feel how great the hope is of taking part in the joy of God's own household, and ask how we are to be made ready. We must not think to go in as we are when God finds us; and we have no means to provide for ourselves the fitting robe. But He who calls us tells us how to come, and He gives what is right and needful without money and without price. We are called, and while we are in the Church on earth, we are meant to put on the dress in which we may meet the King's eye, in the mansion above, where the eternal feast is being prepared. We may not dare to think of taking our place among the holy ones in glory, such as we have been while walking in the ways of sin; nor can we choose what change we shall make. He who gives the feast has a right to fix the terms on which we are to be received. There is one sort of wedding garment; and no other, however good it may seem to us, will do.

What is it? The Bible tells us, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Only clothed in Him, in His righteousness, in His holy nature, can we pass the close, searching test to which the King will put us when He comes in. But what is meant by this? Is the robe only something outside ourselves, to be thrown over us to hide what we are; to cover the stains and the filthy rags? Surely this would not satisfy the Searcher of hearts, who looks men

through and through, and asks for truth and beauty in our inmost parts. Surely the robe is not to make us seem like what we are not, but to change us to what we ought to be. Surely we must be "washed first," and our inner being must be purified, before the outward beauty, which is a sign of it, can appear. To the other guests, the man, whose real state was plain to the King's eye, seemed like themselves. He who saw underneath the outside alone knew that the man had not been "washed first." He deceived himself and others, but not the King. His evil self was covered but not changed; he "had not on a wedding garment." The wedding garment is not something put on from without, and so no part of him who wears it. It belongs to the inner spiritual being, and it shows itself by shining outward. Such may have been the clothing of our first parents before they fell, when the light of God's own purity gleamed out from their spirits, and robed their bodies in a dress of glory. Such may have been the glory in which Christ was wrapped on the Mount of Transfiguration.

We have been "washed" in the blood of the Lamb, when by God's own Spirit's power we were "baptized into Christ," and we "put on Christ." This was in order that we might be "sanctified," and at last "glorified." Perhaps we have put off Christ by obeying not the sanctifying spirit, but our own desires. So we need to be "washed" again, and to be "renewed in the spirit of our mind;" we need to be changed, so that the old evil nature be all put off, and we be made like Christ by the power of Christ living in us. Being made like Christ, we shall look like Him. The wedding garment, shining in its pure beauty, will show that we have been "washed first."

WEEDS AND FRUIT.

A GARDENER does not work his ground to good purpose, who only pulls up weeds and clears away stones. If he wants to live and to pay his rent, he must not only take some things out, but put other things in. He must work that some things may spring up and flourish, as well as watch lest other things grow and spread. He roots out weeds, to make room and leave the ground free for plants which will bear flowers and fruit. A man who pleaded that he had no time to do more than keep down weeds, and could not sow and tend what is useful, would be put by his friends into a lunatic asylum before he found his own way into the workhouse.

Such folly is not met among toilers for time. It is not rare among those who say they work for God, and who look for a spiritual harvest. Our natures are, in the first place, our care. We are given a charge to make them fruitful for God. We find the seeds of evil in us. Thorns and briers, which tell of our fallen state, spring up of themselves. If left to grow, they spread and strengthen fast, leaving no place for what is good and wholesome. With the sweat of our brow, with all care and hard work, we must tear them up, however deeply rooted, no matter what pain the effort costs. But, for what end? All is not done when this is done. God will ask, in the end, not to see the great heap of weeds which we have cast out, but the fruit of the good seed He sows. What is evil should not only make room for what is good, but the destruction of it should help to fertilise the soil of our natures, making the fruit for God grow more richly.

Many people waste their lives in letting weeds grow and in clearing them away. Thus they never really make any progress, but get more out of heart, wearied, unbelieving. They are careless for a time: then they

suddenly wake up to find that faults have got big, have ripened, and have even shed their seed; that habits have been formed of thinking, speaking, and doing, which make them feel as if they were wholly given over to evil. They set to work, however: and after long sorrow and toil, they are able, with God's help, to master what their neglect allowed to take possession of them. Then comes another time of sleep, to be followed by another awaking to fresh battle with revived sin, harder to overcome. So they never get nearer to readiness for the harvest. There is nothing to cheer with the promise of good fruit which will receive God's blessing.

Other very true people, who wish to be right, fail in only a less degree. They do not make the progress they ought, or have the joy God means for them. They are always bowed down, searching for weeds; they do not care enough for the growth and ripening of flowers and fruit, looking up for the dew and light of heaven to bless their toil. The wholesome plants, if cherished well, ought to choke the thorns, so that when once weeded out they cannot rise to any strength again. True it is that the seeds are there, and other seeds will be borne from without, while we are imperfect in a sinful world. We need to watch always, but our watching against sin should be the watching of those who take for granted that as soon as evil shows itself it should be put away: it should be the watching of those who seek to be fruitful in every good work. To be without fault is not only to be free from what God forbids, but to have all that God commands. We are called not only to keep from falling, and if we fall to rise; but to ascend. We are called not only to cease to do evil, but to learn to do well. The best way to cease from sin is to follow holiness. If we only think of our own guilt and weakness, we have no high aim, and are sure to fail in courage. If we set Christ ever before us and strive to follow and grow like Him, we are cheered by the great hope God gives us, we take the death of all sin for granted. The rooting out of evil is done as a matter of course, not as our greatest end in

life, but as a part of the great work God sets us of bringing forth good fruit a hundred-fold for Him.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE.

MUCH of the life of Christian people is passed in repenting, and shaking off the bonds and stains of sin. This is right, because Christian people sin so much. It is well, when we have sinned, to be in earnest and to spare no labour, that we may come in right humility, bringing all our evil to our Saviour. But we sin far more than we need. We do not watch enough and pray enough, and fight and toil enough. Were we as earnest in guarding against sin and growing holy, as we are in seeking pardon after falls, how much better would it be! It is far happier to climb on and upwards steadily, than to be always falling and struggling to our feet. It is far happier to grow stronger day by day than to be continually losing health and coming to be cured. It is far happier to build on, working with one hand and wielding a sword to keep away foes with the other, than to let our work be broken down and have to repair it. Christ is indeed the Saviour, the Good Physician, the Restorer; but His great joy is in those who let Him keep them safely, and train them to full manhood and perfect holiness. If we are much in hospital, we cannot do much work.

We are but poor soldiers, if we let our foes take us captive, day by day, and then call on our king to ransom us. We disgrace our colours if we run away in fight, or lay down our arms, in the hope that our leader will come to help and rescue us. If we would seek more for daily strength, we should not have such need of daily pardon.

FEAR GOD, FEAR SELF.

NO one can hide from God. The whole life of each is plain to Him whose eye is always on the beings whom He has made, and who keeps firm hold on them even when they seem most alone. No thought or feeling can rise, but He knows it altogether. No word passes the lips, that He does not mark in its full meaning and value. No act is done out of His sight. He is a Person who has us in His power and can do with us as He will, who cares for us with the love of a Father, and seeks our good. How foolish it is to be unmindful of that Being, and to live as if we were alone or only with our fellow-men! How mad it is to dare such power, before which mighty angels tremble! How shameful it is to degrade ourselves before the bright and glorious purity of God, as if we cared not for His judgment of us! How ungrateful it is to let His kindness plead in vain, and to use the very gifts of His bounty as means with which to dishonour Him! If there be no God, then we may live as if there were no God: if there be a God, if only it be possible that God is, then we should take the fact of His existence and His nearness into account.

There is another, in whose presence we always live, from whom we cannot get away, who forms a judgment of us, who remembers every part of all our lives. Each of us lives and moves before *himself*. He knows his own thoughts and feelings, what he loves and dislikes, what he thinks of with most pleasure, what pain and anger disturb him. He listens to his own words. He watches the course of his own life. The memory of the past is stored in his mind, and old sins of long ago will, from time to time, rise up and face him. God may pardon his sin, a friend may forget his shame; but he will not forget it, or forgive himself for it. He will always feel that he is the man who did the wrong, and lowered himself from what he was before he did it. No passing pleasure

or gain of sin can make up for such loss of self-respect. Through the higher, nobler, purer self in a man, God speaks and warns. The conscience is a witness for God. Fear of self is a help to fear of God. Care not to be degraded in one's own eyes leads to thoughts of the pure Fatherly eye of God, that never closes or turns away. In times of temptation it is wise to ask, "How shall I do this great wickedness?" as well as to ask, "How shall I sin against the Lord?" "How shall I, a son of the Holy God, and heir of heaven, forget my calling and grieve my Father by my shame?"

CONSCIENCE.

SOME people use their conscience as if it were a dark lantern. They only let it give light now and then, and when it suits them. They choose to go on in darkness, so that they may not be checked in doing wrong. When it is too late for them to be held back from what they like or wish to get, they let the light shine out. They have the sinful joy; the ill-gotten gain is their own; then conscience is allowed to make their wrong-doing plain. Conscience is made only a light to show the stains that shame, instead of being a light to lead along the safe and peaceful paths whose end is glory. So these men are like one who goes along a dirty road in darkness, and at the end lets the light, which he has had with him all the while, shine out to show how dirty he is, and need not have become.

There are those whose conscience is ever blaming them for hardness, or rash judgments, or bad temper; while it is never used to warn them to check the rising ill-will, or the wounding word. There are those whose conscience tells them clearly that they have been dishonest, or unclean; but fails to keep them pure, or hold them back from crooked ways and little tricks of trade. Many persons even

find comfort in their sin, because they feel the shame of it. They do not mean to give it up; because they are always sorry and uneasy about it, they think that all is not wrong with them. They go through a course. They shut their eyes to the light, or put the light out of view, while they sin in their own chosen way; and then find comfort in the self-blame which is forced on them when the light comes back.

God gave us a conscience to speak for Him in our souls, and to throw the light of truth around us and in front. The aim of this good gift is not to shame and sadden us, but to guide us safely on and up towards full joy, and peace, and holiness. It has to do with the future; not only or chiefly with the past. It has to do with a high aim, and a true God-given hope; not only or chiefly with sin and failure. It ought to tell us more of what, by God's grace to His sons, we may be: we should give it less to do with what, through neglect of our Father's grace, we have shamefully done or have become. It is well, of course, when we have sinned, to let God's light which He has given blaze full on us and on our sin. We must do this; but it is mockery of God and ourselves if, while we own our sin, we fail to ask for the path by which to climb on safely, and to pray for grace to use the light, that we may wander and fall no more. When we sin we must remember that we not only have fallen from where and what we were, but are down below the place and state to which we might have risen.

WELL MIGHT HE WEEP.

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it."—*St. Luke* xix. 41.

WHY did Jesus weep over Jerusalem? There was nothing sad in the look of the city, as He stood on the hill, and gazed at it across the valley below. It was

fair to the eye, "beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth." No sign of evil days past, no warning of evil to come, was anywhere around. All seemed bright and glad. Those who saw the Saviour's outburst of grief might have wondered what His meaning was. But He well might weep, for He saw under the fair outside; He looked beyond the careless present. With the eye of God He read the dark tale of sin to which every hour was adding. He traced on the course of sin till it ended as sin always does. He knew that in a little while wrath long delayed must fall. He knew that Jerusalem would not hear Him—would not believe or obey God. He knew that the day of grace was closing, and that the darkness was even now come upon her, in which the things that belonged to her peace were hidden. He well might weep, for He loved Jerusalem with the love of God, and He knew what judgment is.

And to those who think of things as Christ does, what is more sad to look at than a great town? Men are proud of it: the buildings are grand: its trade grows fast: its work thrives: money is made: all the joys which wealth can buy are in it. The outside tells only of prosperity. But lift that which hides the under-life of that crowd; look forward, and ask about the end. These thousands are dying. While they work, and laugh, and lay by money, or spend it, they go fast on to the great judgment. And how many know why they live, or whither they are moving on? How many care to listen to God, or try in a true way to do His will and get ready to meet Him? How many have a thought of any higher life? How many let the good thoughts which God gives to them guide or change their life? Some are hard sinners, breaking man's laws as well as God's. Some are wholly given up to worldly aims, and have one avaricious end in all they do. Some are toiling under heavy tasks, crushed with care, and sulkily or hopelessly turning away from Heaven's words of cheer and hope and warning. Some are half-hearted professors of religion, who go to church, but grudge the time spent; who say their prayers but

only in part believe that God hears, and care little whether He does or not. Only a few—how few!—live as if they knew of heaven and hell, of sin and a Saviour. How many live as if God were more than a name, or One whose favour is worth having, and with whom it is unsafe to trifle?

All this prosperity, all this pleasure, all this which makes a great town rich and famous—what is it all worth, if Jesus sees only cause for weeping? What shall it profit each of the souls that make up that vast population, if there be no treasure for it, no joy in heaven? When the fire of God falls on the world, there will be no buyers of the goods men make their all. When the stroke of death lays men low, and there is no home here but the grave, earthly pleasures will be out of reach. If there be nothing else than these things, how shall men fare in the long ages of eternity?

Well may the Saviour weep over Christian cities now! Well may those who love men wring their hands and tremble and groan in spirit as they watch the crowd of their fellow-immortals, and think of those dreadful, true words—"The *wicked* shall be turned into hell, and all the people that *forget God!*"

ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL.

THIS is the way in which God tells us to feel towards evil. We can learn something of what the claim means, if we think how much we may do, and yet fall short of it. The common notion among men is, that it is enough to keep from those bad sins that disturb the ease or offend the taste of the world. Now this may, and often does, cost a man great pains and hard self-denial. Even to give up or keep from one evil course may need a stern effort of will and work. For the drunkard to become sober, for the dishonest to become a fair dealer, for the

passionate to master his temper, is a very grand triumph. The man who wins it is a true hero. We give him all honour. So far, so good. But there is no proof yet that evil has been forsaken, even in heart and wish. One form in which evil had shown itself may be crushed, while others only grow stronger. And so we often find that when one bad spirit is cast out, others, such as pride, come in to take its place. There is as much evil as before, and perhaps of a deadlier sort. A disfiguring disease may be healed, but the poison may only be driven inward where it is out of reach.

But take the case of a man who girds himself to put away evil as a whole. He works with careful watchfulness, and a firm will. He honestly tries to find out and put from him whatever is wrong. Still there is no sure proof that he abhors evil. Why does he guard his life and conduct? What is the secret of his steady blamelessness?

A man may choose to gain by fair means, because he is keen enough to know that, in the long run, it pays better than gaining unfairly. He may invest in honesty, only because it is a better speculation than swindling, from no love of honesty, only from love of self and money.

In the same way a man may check his temper and keep down a proud, violent spirit, just as a tradesman paints the outside of his shop. He may cultivate and practise a kindly, gentle manner, while he never thinks of becoming gentle himself. The manner may be put on to hide what is within, and be not at all an expression of it. Care for man, and for man's opinion, keeps a check over much of the evil to which those are tempted who depend on their fellow-men for place or profit. We value the restraint. It is a good thing for the world's peace. There is nothing to admire in those who are guided by it, except their keen eye to business.

Self-respect is another very strong motive which has great power for good over people of a higher nature. There are men who little heed what those around them think or say, but who fear self-reproach and shame in their own eyes with a most keen dread. Blame would rouse them to

dare the world, to show how much they scorn it, and how well able they are to go on without its good word; but their honour is more dear to them than life. To feel that stained, to feel that they must doubt its purity, would make life unbearable. They will give up and put away gain, and place, and pleasure, quite as a thing of course, rather than have the least risk of dishonour. Men call this pride. It is pride, but pride of a very good sort; and, where religion is wanting, does human nature and the world good service.

The abiding sense of one's own presence is the next thing in power and value to the feeling of the nearness of God. Fear of self saves many a man from evil, before the fear of a higher Being has gained hold on him. Self-love keeps many a man from what would spoil and degrade him, before he has felt the power of God's claims on the heart. One thus guarded may live a high-minded and outwardly blameless life: he may look on a lie as an impossible degradation no more to be thought of than suicide. He may hold himself far above the low sins in which coarser natures wallow. All the while there may be no abhorring of evil as evil, and because it is evil. He may abhor some sins because he thinks them low and disgraceful; but not abhor all low, and mean, and cowardly thoughts, and ways, and words, and deeds, because they are sinful. So he may indeed keep all the commandments but one. He may worship another God than the alone true God. He may do all he does and avoid all he keeps from, in love and fear of one being, and that one—himself.

There is yet another power which has much to do with keeping down the strong evil that is in the world. Dread of the Judge, of the last great day, of the endless doom, frighten many men back from tempting sins, and lash them into self-restraint. Self-restraint it is indeed, for the whole self longs after the sin, and loves it, and would do it if it dared. The dog hungers for the filth, but the whip drives it cowering away. The sow longs to be wallowing in the mire, and gets as near as it can, but a stern voice and fear of blows keep it in a clean place. The dog and the sow are dog and sow still. How many there

are who would be devils if there were no hell, who would be held back by no sense of right, no conscience, no wish for heaven, no love for God, if they might only get rid of the haunting sense that an eye watches them which must be met on the Day of Judgment! Many would steal if there were no jail for thieves. Many would murder if they could do it safely. So there are multitudes who would sin with a glad heart if they could only be sure that there is no God, no hereafter.

This dread of pain and loss is a useful motive. It holds in check low natures that are unable to feel higher restraints. Of course it is but one form of selfishness. It is in no sense religion. There is no change of nature here. There is no abhorring of evil; rather of Him who warns the sinner back from what is craved for.

Alas! how often do the best find in their heart a love of evil, which their God-taught, God-given nature loathes and puts away strongly! The attraction of the sin is felt, while it is struck at or turned away from. What we have to aim at is, not only to feel that we ought to abhor evil, not only to try to abhor it, but, in fact, to do so. We abhor it aright when it has lost its charm, and we have learned to look at it as God does when to do evil would be to pain oneself.

LOVE AND HATRED.

WE are bound to hate sin; and yet many sinful things are pleasant. We are bound to love that which is good; and yet duty often costs much self-denial and pain. Honest souls are sorely tried, at times, by what seems a claim which they cannot meet. They find themselves loving and longing after what is forbidden. They have to force themselves to do what is right and according to God's Will. They do not indeed take the sinful pleasure, or neglect the call of conscience; but they are full of shame

and sadness at the way in which their hearts turn towards what is evil, and are cold and slow in doing what is right.

Sometimes this proves that old long-standing habits of sin cannot at once or quickly be thrown off; that powers weakened by disuse will not be strong and ready as soon as the awakened soul wishes to employ them; that new ways of life are not learned without pain and trouble. Those who change their path and begin to serve God must look for strangeness and difficulty, and must not wonder or lose heart if the roots of evil are sunk deeply, and the humbling signs of the past are but slowly cleansed away.

But it is not only beginners in the Christian life who know this grief. Those who have borne the yoke long, find it often gall them, and they tremble as they feel a slothful wish to cast it off. Those who have carried the Cross for years, mourn as they confess that it is painful still, and that what Christ bids them forsake has attractions for them that are hard to resist.

There is no cause for discouragement, while the will holds fast to God's will, and grasps the power of Divine grace. There would be no strength in temptation, were the snares of sin not made tempting. There would be no need of grace, were well-doing always easy. What could men offer as a sacrifice, if well-doing cost them nothing? There are pleasures in sin; there is self-denial in obedience to God. Levi, the publican, loved his money, but he left it when a stronger love drew him away. Abraham's devotion and obedience to God were not lessened by the love with which he clung to his child. There is a higher example still: Christ Jesus, as a man, loved rest and all that can make the world bright; He would not have been perfect man, had He not done so. He shrank from pain as really as we do. There was true agony in His cry that the cup might pass. But He had a stronger desire than this natural wish. He longed and determined, with firm will, to do His Father's will at all cost. While He let His request be made known, He prayed that His will as a man, to whom suffering was painful, should not

have its way, but that His will to finish His work according to God's plan should be done.

A man sins when he is led away of his own lusts, in spite of the will and grace of God. His lower nature has these desires; but the will of God teaches how far they can be rightly indulged, and the grace of God enables to keep them in order, so as not to sin. Man's will is not destroyed by God's will; it is made obedient to it, and by degrees becomes one with it. The desires of the lower nature are not taken away by grace: they are ruled and purified. What tempts and attracts the lower nature may be hated by a man because it is sinful in itself, or because it cannot be had without sin. It will be hated more because of its strong attraction; for the danger of it is felt, and it seems a humiliation to have to fight so long and so hard against it. What the lower nature shrinks from, such as pain, self-sacrifice, toil, death, may be joy to the man who knows the will of God and is strong in the grace of God, and loves God, and makes it the great aim of his life to please God. He who does right, at all cost of self-denial, finds more true joy in the feeling of God's favour and of growing strength, than all the pleasures and gains of sin could give.

HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE HIM?

EVERYONE has heard the story of the merchant and his friends. He had failed in business, through no fault of his own; and when he lost his money, did not lose his honour or good name. When the news spread on Change, all who had known him in prosperity vied with one another in declaring how they felt for him in his fall. But, for a long while, nothing was done, though many kind things were said. At last one merchant startled the rest by the words, "How much do you pity him? I pity him £500. Let us show that we can do more than talk;

let us set our friend on his feet again." The scheme was taken up warmly, and very soon those present were proved to have "pitied" their friend to an amount which enabled him to make a new start in business. Some indeed drew away, very ready to talk, but not ready to act up to their professions. Some gave, but they would much rather not have been asked to do what cost them anything.

We need to test, in some way like this, the words we speak about God and to God. When the goodness of our Father, the lowliness and sorrows of our Saviour, and the patience of the Spirit are brought before our minds and hearts, warm words come easily. We are ready to say, "How can I help loving God, and grieving for the pains Christ bore for me!" And when at church the words of prayer and praise are before us, and we are led on with the congregation, all seems a thing of course. But, will what we say, and what we think we feel, bear testing? What if an angel were to stand in the midst of a church full of people, at the end of service, and ask each, one by one, "How much do you love God?" Would not many a head be bowed; would not many a conscience be full of shame? Would not many a man tremble at the test put to him?

How much do *you* love God? Do you love Him enough to give up that dishonest way of gain? If not, cease trifling with yourself and mocking God. Write down the amount of what you get unfairly; call that your god and worship it.

How much do *you* love God? Do you love Him enough to make you ready for His sake to do without the pleasure of idle gossip, and to rein your tongue that it "speak no evil?" Try with God's help to do this, or else say no more to God about loving Him.

How much do *you* love God? What does love for Him lead you to do, or bear, or part with? What cross have you taken up and borne; in what have you denied yourself? How far are you ready to leave all and follow, when He who died for love of you beckons?

How much vain talk, how many hollow, unreal words

does God hear! Alas! how little true readiness of heart does God find, to enable Him to carry on His work in souls! He is merciful, but He is not mocked. An open, daring sinner who knows Him not, must be an object of the Saviour's deepest, most painful sorrow. How awful and horrible before heaven must be he who reads his Bible, says his prayers, goes to church, speaks and sings to Christ of love and devotion, while wilfully living on in known sin! "How much do you love Me?" might Christ say to such a one; "not enough for you to part with this small, passing, unclean thing for My sake! Surely your portion can only be with the hypocrites."

TELL GOD, IF YOU DARE.

IT is not easy to go on doing wrong or neglecting duty without some trouble of conscience. Few are so hard and old in sin as to feel no doubt at times. God's claim to service and honour makes itself heard. God's law warns with clear, stern voice. The claim is owned to be right and good. The law is felt to be binding. And the love of Christ finds its way to the heart, and touches it with a feeling of shame and self-reproach.

But the lives of perhaps most men are spent in excusing themselves for what conscience condemns. They are always on the defensive, always pleading that their sinful ways are not very sinful, always finding out what seem good reasons for their neglect or their wrong-doing. And so they try hard to go on in their own way, and very often they spend far more trouble in getting off a duty, or in excusing a sin, than a true, honest, self-denying course of right would cost.

If men only want to quiet their consciences, any excuse will do. But if men are in earnest in seeking to be right in God's eyes, they ought to distrust everything that makes sin or neglect look less sinful; they ought to prove

every excuse as in God's presence, and before the throne of the Almighty Judge.

For example—You think you have a good reason for choosing some wrong course, or living without some means of grace. Test it. It is not enough to say it in plain words to your own self, for you are interested and prejudiced. Nor is it enough to ask a neighbour: your neighbour will not be your judge at the last day. Say it to God. When you kneel down to say your prayers, try to feel as if you were making your last prayer, and tell God why you are disobeying His law, or living without the help He offers in means of grace. Be honest and plain-spoken, and see whether you can look into the eye of God and plead your excuses without any faltering of your tongue or misgiving of your heart.

HEARING AND DOING.

"I ALWAYS like to hear a good sermon;" "I like to go where I can get good." This is the sort of saying that one often hears. A good sermon is a good thing, and to get good is a very right aim to have. But many people need to be reminded that the great purpose in going to church should not be to hear or to get, and that much hearing is worse than vain, and that those who think they get much profit often go empty away.

We can read the Bible or good books at home; but we cannot at home join with the Church in the common worship of Almighty God. We meet together in God's house that, with one voice and heart, we may praise Him for His mercies, and may plead the work and merits of our Saviour. The words of Scripture read and explained do indeed come with fresh power when we meet solemnly for worship, and we hear, along with others, the great truths that are of interest to us all. But the end of hearing is that we should be roused to more devotion of heart and

life. If we are only "pleased" or stirred by feelings of alarm or comfort that lead to nothing, we have no religious profit in coming to church. It is no more a sign of religion to like a sermon than to admire a picture. Sermons that please are more asked for than sermons that teach or guide to repentance and holiness. A sermon with some funny name, which promises to amuse people for half-an-hour, if they will listen for five minutes about religion at the end, is sure to attract. A lecture on some public man, with a hymn before or after it, will draw crowds; many of whom will persuade themselves that they spend Sunday in a very edifying and pious way, and in a much more intellectual way than those who find one day out of seven quite little enough time for study of God's truth and for holding communion with Him.

If a sermon does not make a man better, it not only fails to do him good, it makes him worse. To have truths put before him which he does not act upon, adds to his amount of responsibility. To have his feelings moved, without his feelings moving his life, makes him more hard, each time, and less likely ever to change his way. He gets used to religious emotions, and to religious sloth in spite of those emotions.

We should think of acting, more than of being acted on, and of giving more than of getting. But the true way to be acted on by God's truth is to live in the light and by the power of what we know. The true way to gain grace is to use diligently what we have, drawing nigh to God in the devotion of holy worship and holy lives.

WORK IT OUT.

IN God we live and move and have our being: we can do nothing without Him. He keeps us alive; He gives us will, and thought, and feeling, and power to do whatever we do. By His help we learn, and work, and grow,

and get fit to fill our place in life. And, as it is with our common life, so it is with our religious life. All our power to do and be what is good and great is God's power, which works in us. He gives us faith, and love, and hope. He shows us our path and work, and makes us able for what He sets before us.

But men seem to forget this. They talk as if they did their work for time, by themselves, without God; while God did their work for eternity, without them. But man is as wholly without strength of his own to dig or build as he is to do works of holiness, and win victories for God. He is as powerless, by himself, to grow from a weak, ignorant child into a trained, educated, strong man, as he is to grow to be a perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Men are wrong if they trust in their own brains and limbs, as if they had made themselves, and their force of will and industry were not from God. They lose the help which comes from the knowledge that their powers are divine gifts, and that they do no work alone; they also rob God of the honour which is His due. In the same way, men are wrong if they trust in their own faith and hope and love, their zeal for religion, their works for others, their high aim for personal purity. They fail to be roused and cheered by the continual sense of God's upholding grace; they deny God His rightful glory.

No one ever says, "I can do nothing by myself, I cannot till my fields, nor train my mind, nor do my daily work without God, so I will not try to do it, or I will be content to do it badly." The man who talked in this way would be called a madman. God certainly would not do, instead of him, the work for which He had given him natural power. This sort of folly is not met with. Men know that they must put forth their own strength. If they know that their own strength is God's in them, they have a new spirit and a fresh courage; they feel their responsibility, and they have a greater hope; they work with their might, remembering that, though all the power and glory are God's, still their success depends on them-

selves. God puts this into their own hands; they must use the powers which He gives them, and so wait for His blessing.

But men often act in quite another way as workers for eternity. They know that by themselves they are helpless. They forget that they are not left helpless, and so they make no brave effort. They prove continually their own weakness; they do not prove the strength of God in them. They feel truly that they are sinful and impure; they do not act on the truth that God is in them a source of holiness. They make up their minds that they must always be low in sin and vice, and powerless. They are ever dwelling on the words, "Without Me ye can do nothing." They do not see that these words are full of cheer, assuring us that all we do is proof of our union with God. They do not think of the glory that is ours, who can say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

God is the source and giver of all bodily and mental power. He is also the giver of all spiritual power, whereby man does good and becomes good. He means us to use and put forth one as well as the other. God does not make a man wise by a miracle, who has neglected his education, and has let his God-given powers lie waste. Neither does God do for a man's soul what He has put power in him to enable him to do. What we turn out in this life depends on ourselves, on the use we make of God's gifts. What we become for the other life depends on ourselves. It does not depend on God. He is sure. He works in us to will and to do what is meant to make us great and good for His presence: the question turns on this, whether we will and do that for which God by His work in us makes us able.

FOXES AND RATS.

THE legs of foxes and rats are sometimes found in traps; not torn off by the traps, but gnawed off by teeth. The animals, when they found themselves caught, have seemed to know that they had the choice of losing a limb or losing life. They have chosen the lesser evil, and have set to work to bite away the leg that held them in danger. It must be a very hard thing to do, but it is very wise. The foxes and the rats love life, and are ready to part with much that is good and useful, if they can only save life. As soon as the question is between a leg and life, they act; and they do not seem to shrink from any pain that what they do may cost them.

This reminds us of our Lord's words, "If thy hand offend thee, if thy foot offend thee, cut it off." Foxes and rats get rid of, and separate themselves from what they cannot keep safely; they prefer living lame and maimed to not living at all.

Men may well learn from them, and take them as patterns of the firmness and the prudence which Christ tells us to show in caring for our eternal life. There are many things which "offend" us, that is, which make us stumble, or go wrong, or stop, or turn back in our Christian course. There are employments, or friends, or pleasures, which we know quite well bring us into danger, and keep us where he who watches to kill our souls has power over us. How do we act? Is there not often a slowness to own danger, and a cowardice in doing what is right and reasonable? Is there not very commonly a wilful choosing of the gain or pleasure that has the mark of sin upon it, and a calm, stupid readiness to take the chance of perishing for the sake of it? Men, indeed, see the snares of the evil one, and go into them, though the bait offered does not hide the teeth of the trap. When they are caught, they do not care to escape, they go on quieting and com-

forting themselves with the pleasant bait, till destruction comes.

The writer met with a case of the sort. He spoke to a man about his religious duties. The answer was very civil, but very plain. "I don't want to be a hypocrite, Sir, and there's no use in my pretending to be religious while I keep this shop. You see it is a sweet shop, and we sell more on Sundays than in the whole week besides. I know it is not right, but what can I do? I cannot afford to lose the money; and while I do this, I am sure there is no use in going to church." There was one good thing in the man. He would not mock God by trying to make up by doing certain duties that cost him nothing, for the guilt of sins that brought him gain. But how dreadful to set the profit of his small Sunday trade against his soul's hope! How daring to go on with his eyes open, in a course which he felt sure shut him off from God's blessing, and made any thought of treasure in heaven vain! "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," is a good call to industry. Men may well be sent to the foxes and the rats to learn a lesson of prudence and resolution.

GIVE ALL UP.

I CALLED to see a sick man. His friends met me at the door, and told me that the doctor said he could do nothing for him. They asked me to tell the man at once that he must die. I refused, and I warned them all to keep it from him as long as possible.

I had my strong, good reasons for this. There are cases in which the whole plain truth should be made known to the sick at once. There are others in which to do so would be cruelty to soul and body. Often the sudden shock of such news unnerves a man and hastens his end,—perhaps takes away the small power of rallying, which is so small that the doctor cannot see it. And, more than this, a man

who knows he cannot live is sometimes unable with any calmness to face the question of his soul's state. And "to give all up" when he knows that nothing can be kept, does not prove that the heart is turned from earth towards heaven. When sentence of death is passed, the time for choice is gone: it is very hard to test the reality of what looks like repentance and faith in those who know that they are dying.

The work of life here is not to get ready for death, but to get ready for the life hereafter; as each part of the life in the world to come will prepare for that which is to follow. Our care should be, not how we shall die, but how we are living. Everyone is always "at the point of death." No one can say who shall be called before any other. Most of the sick can form some notion of the time their illness will last. The healthy have no such sign of God's will for them. Each hour has its own importance. We shall die well, if we live well. Let each hour be spent in the faith and fear and love of God, and in the last hour we shall not dread to meet God. Let us follow Christ in life, and He will show Himself our Saviour in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.

READY TO GO?

THE more sinful men are, the less sinful they think themselves. As men grow to love God and aim at holiness, they grow jealous of the least wrong against God, the smallest stain on the soul and life, which they try, with God's help, to keep pure for Him. And as men grow wise, they know better what is right and wrong. They understand what God looks for, and what they ought to look for themselves. In a clean house or a clean heart, slight specks are seen. Where defilement has been allowed to gather, and the eye has got used to dirt, even serious stains are hardly noticed.

A clergyman went to visit a dying man, whose life for years had been one of faith, and love, and following of Christ. He found him sad, and asked him if there were any cloud between his soul and his Saviour. "No," he said, "I can have no doubt of Him; but, O! the unworthiness! I feel that more, as I learn His goodness." The clergyman went from this man to another who, he was told, was dying. He found him quite aware of his state, but without any sign of the least serious thought. He said he was quite ready to go, that he "gave all up," and was quite sure "things were right with him." Yet, he was one who from a religious life had gone down deep into a life of sin, which for years had dared God, and which was the cause of his present mortal sickness. He had made no self-examination, had not humbled himself in any way before God, had not even begun to pray, or cared to open his Bible. His conscience was easy because, on his own showing, it was defiled and hardened. His soul slept; he had put it to sleep. He had no fear of God, or thought of the Cross. Out of his own mouth his state was declared, and he could not or would not be roused to thought or feeling.

THE WORLD'S SORROW.

MEN have a wholly wrong way of speaking about the trials of life. They seem to take for granted that all that is sad in their lot comes straight from God's hand, and is part of the portion He has fixed for them. And moreover, while at once all sorrow is thought to be God's sending, there is no such quickness in owning Him as the source of joy. Men go on for years, using health, and enjoying friends and pleasures, with no clear thought of any debt to God of gratitude or praise. As soon as any grief comes, there is rebellion against Heaven, or a forced submission, or a patient saying, "Thy will be

done." Very often this looks like blasphemy; for the trouble has come plainly and altogether against the will of God.

Let me show what I mean. There are, no doubt, cases in which God seems to stretch down His hand, and take away joy or give grief. He strikes in punishment, or He warns in mercy, or He chastens in careful love. The stroke seems to be His own doing, so plainly that we must say, "It is the Lord." But most of the woe of life can be easily and surely traced to man's own sin or folly. He defies the plain rules which God has taught him to be guided by, or he is careless and idle: of course, when he suffers he has no one but himself to blame. God has made the world, and has made us, in a certain way. There are laws in all things which may not be neglected, or disobeyed, without loss. The powers of nature are rich in help and good for us, if we use them rightly. If we use them in a wrong way, they surely make us smart for it. There are rewards, too, for filling our place well among our fellow-men; and there is loss if we fail. If a man puts his hand into the fire he is burned. If he stabs himself, or takes poison, he dies. If he throws himself down a cliff, he is dashed to pieces; if he keeps his head under water, he is drowned. Again, if a man is surly or unfriendly, and does his neighbours wrong, he loses the comfort and pleasure of friendship. Of course God made fire to burn. He made man, so that a knife or poison, very useful, like the fire, for many purposes, kills him if used wrongly. He made man so that he cannot fly in the air, and needs air to support his life. In this way it may be said that a person suffers by the will of God, because God has arranged these laws against which he dashes himself. But God does not force men to seek suffering thus. They know the use of the things around them, and it is their own fault if the abuse of them leads to loss or ruin.

And there are laws of God, working in the world, which are quite as easily traced as these. They work as surely, though less quickly. And they show us, if we trifle with them, that they are stronger than we. We know, for the

most part, what we do when we act in spite of them. Take a case. Here is a man sick and in pain, with a worn out body and a weakened mind. He talks of being patient under God's hand. What is his story? He has perhaps for years been a drunkard, in spite of the warnings which each fit of drunkenness gave him that he was wronging nature. Perhaps he has been a glutton, eating what he knew was too much for him, or what he felt to be unwholesome. What right has he to talk of not murmuring against God, any more than the man has who cuts his throat? Here is another man, who has allowed dirt to collect round his house, who has let the air of his house be foul, who has left his body and his clothes unwashed. He is fever-stricken, and he takes credit to himself because he does not rebel against God's will. It is God's will that dirt should make men suffer, if left in the wrong place, but it is not God's will that men should leave it in the wrong place. Prussic acid is a poison, and so is dirt. Men may, in most cases, choose whether they will die or not, from one or the other. Again, here is a man starving and unclad. He talks of God's will, and trusts it may be better for the poor in the next world. Ask him why he is poor, whether he need have been poor. Perhaps his life has been a life of inexcusable mistakes, of idleness, of waste. Perhaps he has tired his friends by a long course of reckless living, and lost his character so that no one will trust him or employ him. Surely it was God's will that he should use the opportunities he had. Surely his own wilfulness has destroyed him.

Here is a woman who is beaten and ill-used by a drunken husband, who treats her worse than he would treat his dog. She wonders why God tries her so, and does her best not to think hardly of Him. But, ask her a few questions. Perhaps she was warned against her husband by all her friends. She knew he was a drunkard, and a man with no high character, when she married him. God warned her through her conscience and her common sense. Her own wilfulness put her in the power of one who makes her life a hopeless misery.

Such cases might be given without end. The more we think, the more clear it is that very few of the sorrows we bear may not be traced to the fault or folly of ourselves or others. There need not be a tithe of the woe that clouds the world. By far the greater part of it is man's own doing, in spite of the knowledge which God has given of His will, in spite of all God has done to save man from harming himself. God wills not man's sorrow. Man chooses that which God tells him will bring sorrow, or neglects that which God teaches him is needful for his good. It is sin to turn a deaf ear to God's warning, to refuse His guiding, to spoil the body and the mind which He has given us. It is adding sin to sin, to pull down ruin on our heads with our own hands, and then say that God has done it. We have no promise that He will work miracles to save us from the plain end of our own folly. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can a man who sows thorns and thistles expect to gather grapes?

OUT OF DANGER.

"HE is out of danger now." What welcome music these words have been to many care-worn hearts! Few words have brought to lips a more truly-felt "Thank God." We watch one lying in the grasp of a deadly sickness, against which all loving care, all skill, seem vain. The strength fails day by day, and each hour there is less to which hope can cling. At last a change comes: we are afraid at first to trust it. How we watch for the look in the doctor's face, that tells, before he speaks, that the worst is over! How carefully we tend the yet weak returning life! How glad and thankful we are when at last we hear that the patient is "out of danger!"

Yes, life is dear to us all. We cling to our friends when we think they are going away. We forget their

faults when we see them in pain. We only think of what is good in them; we forgive wrongs; we blame ourselves if we have been hard on them, or have failed in duty. We wish to keep them with us, we hope that they will be more to us, we resolve that we shall be more to them.

But are the sick out of danger when health comes back to them, and the world is to have them in it still? Is not recovery, in many cases, the return of danger? Look at that little child, over whose cradle his mother bends with full glad heart. Is he safer now, when, almost within the fold, almost in the Shepherd's arms, he comes back and has before him long years of life in this world of trial? Is he out of danger even while under his mother's care? Will she guard him from Satan and sin? Will she pray for him to God, as she entreats the doctor to do all to save him for her? Will she, perhaps, poison his soul or lead him in unhealthy ways, where his spiritual life is sure to sicken and fade? And, when he grows up, what foes must he face, what infection of sin must he come near! If a child die, he is safe: he goes where no harm can reach him. If he lives, who can tell but that he lives to die for ever? He is out of danger if he dies. If he recovers, he is in danger, and is not safe till he has died well.

Look again at that man who on his sick bed has been brought low in spirit, and has learned of his sin and his Saviour. He prays now. He is full of shame for past neglect. He sees how he should have lived. He knows how God claims his love. With all his will he tries to lay hold on the grace of God, and go to his Father, and seek life. Is he "out of danger" when the disease yields, and he rises from his bed, and turns his back on the grave and his face to the world? Do not those who watch for his soul tremble for him now, even while they rejoice in his being spared? Do they not know how sore a trial he must pass through, how much grace he will need in the great danger of coming into the world once more? The world looks very fair and bright, when we see it after we thought we were done with all its good things. It has all the fresh

charm of novelty and all the charm of old associations. Friends are glad to greet us, and the work and joys of the world wait for us. Very few there are who do not fall. The danger is a real one, and few are humble and strong enough to pass safely through it. Well may men dread this danger, well may they be warned of it. It is the danger of being unthankful to the God who helped us back to life, and spoke mercy to us, as we trembled in our sin, when we feared to die. It is the danger of being false to God, false to our vows and promises made to Him. It is the danger of trampling under foot the Blood of Christ, and driving away the Holy Spirit. It is the danger of deserving that it should be said of us, "The dog is returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

SIN'S MARTYRS.

MEN are apt to think that it is only God's servants who suffer for their Master's sake. We read of those who have left home and friends, that they might obey the call of God. They wanted to give up everything for Him. Love to Him made them long to be more free to work in His cause, or they wished to take what might have been spent on their own worldly comfort, and give it, for God's sake, to their poor brethren or to the work of the Church. Sometimes, too, men have let all they had be taken from them; they have even given up life, because their faith was dear to them, and at all costs they could not deny it, or be false to their God. We wonder at these men; we think what a power there must be in the religion, that leads to such acts of faith and love.

But why should we wonder? Has not sin its martyrs too? May they not be numbered by thousands? We see them all round us. We meet them day by day in our streets. We see them in their empty squalid homes. We

hear their words of hopeless misery, when they lie waiting for death.

Are there not multitudes, who, for the sake of one low vice, such as drunkenness, will give up home and friends, and doom themselves to poverty and shame? They know what they are doing. They know well that, ere long, death must come. They yield themselves calmly to sure martyrdom and eternal loss of all.

Again, are there not multitudes who are martyrs to indolence, or worldliness, or vanity, or the lust of money? Count up what they lose, what they let go from them with their eyes open, what they will bear of pain, and scorn, and mockery.

Think of it. Does not God ask indeed little from those who serve Him. Are not the sacrifices which He asks trifling, compared with those which the slaves of sin must make? And are not they whom He bids leave all, as none compared with those whom sin strips bare and casts out alone to ruin.

And God gives help to those whom He tries. He gives faith that they may lean on Him and be supported. He gives love to cheer them, that they may be glad to bear for His sake. And what He takes away is only of things of time. He gives His word that for each toil and sorrow borne for Him, there is laid up a reward beyond all price. There is a hope set before His martyrs; they can go forward brightly and full of strength, looking unto Jesus, who bore the cross that a crown might be won for them. They know that all they seem to lose is only taken by their Father to be ready for them in the home on high. Each pain they suffer is a medicine, which the wise and good Physician gives to make their souls pure, and fill them with undying life.

Has sin any comfort to give those whom it plunders, and drags down to ruin? Are not the woes of the ungodly only foretastes of yet more awful woe to come? The disease and pain of body tell of the death of the whole man. The loss of worldly goods tells of eternal nakedness and shame. The loss of friends and of all whose love they care for warns of that dwelling place where all are hateful, and

hate one another. Which master is the hardest; which is it best to serve? Shall we trust ourselves to the wise hands of a Father who loves us, or let one who hates us have his will?

CHEAP SOULS.

THERE are many old stories of men, who are said to have sold their souls to Satan. Some great bribe was given them—wealth, power, high place in the world. For a fixed number of years they were to enjoy these things, and at a fixed time their souls were to pass into the hands of Satan as his own purchased right. These stories are very awful, and we think, as we read them, that no one could be so mad as to sell Eternity's sure good for the sake of anything here. We feel how any joy would be made dark, if the shadow of the coming day of reckoning hung over the soul, and hour by hour more of the joy was spent, and woe unknown became more nearly *all* the future. And, we ask, how could a man have true joy, while his heart told him that he was daring the good God, and refusing His gifts for ever?

But are we sure that no one ever did, that no one ever does what these stories tell of? We do not believe that a bargain is made, and that men count calmly on what they give and gain. But we know that men, all round us, and that perhaps we ourselves, are often tempted to part with our hope of heaven for some passing, small pleasure or profit. And the strange thing is, how poor a bribe is enough to lead men to risk their all. The power of evil does not need to promise great things; only the saving often of a little trouble, the winning of a word of praise, some paltry profit in trade. Men have got into a way of looking on sin as if it were only like the daily stain, which, as a matter of course, is daily washed or brushed from the body or the clothes. But sin is a deadly and an inward

thing, and "he that offends in one point is guilty of all." Each wilful choice of sin is a shaking loose from God's hold, and a clasping of the hand of Satan. Each course of sin, wilfully gone on in, is a continual saying to God "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of Thy laws." Moreover, it is a deliberate following of the beck, and taking the daily pay of Satan.

Take some cases in which people sell their souls' hope for a small price. A clergyman knows the truth, but fears to speak it out like a man, and a herald of God. He wants some unbelievers or ill-doers to speak well of him; so, for the sake of this, he calls down on his head the curse which God speaks against such.

A manufacturer uses his people only as "hands," and holds back from them by false statements the fair worth of their labour. For the money added thus to his yearly gains he sells his soul.

A shopkeeper mixes what is worthless, or what is injurious, with what he offers to his customers. He sells water as milk, lard as butter, cotton as wool; and for the difference in his gains, he sells his soul.

A workman idles part of the time bought from him by his master; he "scamps" his work, gives bad material and bad labour, while he is paid for good. He has more money, and less hard work; but, alas, has each day less chance of heaven, and is more in the grasp of evil.

A child tells a lie to escape blame, or cheats at school to win a place. Shame on those who help the child to be afraid of doing right, or who fail to teach him of the Good Shepherd, who is grieved to see the lambs of the flock tempted to stay where the wolf lurks.

When a temptation comes, one way to meet it is to ask, "Is it worth while to sell my soul for this? Perhaps I may not get it back again."

PREPARE FOR TEMPTATION.

GOD gives us grace, not that we may idly enjoy it, but that we may use it for our good and for His glory. He arms us that we may fight, He strengthens us for work. We are very apt to forget this, and to wonder why temptation and conflict so often follow closely on our best times of spiritual privilege. We have had a happy Communion, or great peace and light have come to us in prayer: we have been sure that God drew near and blessed us; then, all at once, we find ourselves face to face with some dark temptation. We seem hemmed in by evil, and left alone. We lose heart, we doubt whether God indeed has given us grace, or we have only deceived ourselves. But why should we think thus? Ought we not rather to look upon the fresh trial as a fresh proof that it has been well with us? Our foe does not seek to spoil the empty, but the rich. God has trusted us with this power, and calls on us to do great things with it. We must not fail through unbelief, or sloth, or cowardice. We must not lose the gift of God, or miss the new strength and blessing we may gain by using it well. Of course there are temptations which we may provoke by our own fault and carelessness; but if we are watchful and true, the trial that God allows to come is indeed an offer of more grace and of new blessing. It is not to be feared or rebelled against, but met humbly and bravely with full, calm trust in the faithfulness of our Lord. Christ was driven into the wilderness to be tempted, immediately after the Holy Spirit had come down upon Him, and the Father, from the opened heaven, proclaimed Him His beloved Son. After the temptation angels ministered to Him. He had proved His armour and went forth to conquer for man.

TRIAL.

SORROWS are hard to bear. Want, sickness, loss of friends, try a man sorely. It is not easy for him to be brave, and strong, and full of hope, when all seems against him, and the world is dark and sad. Only one thing can keep him from being crushed; that is the thought of God's promises to the weary and the mourning. We know what this can do. We have all seen how cheerful and bright people can be, in the deepest sorrow, when this light from another world shines down on them. And indeed, though often we wonder how they are able to rise above their trials, they do well to be glad who can trust their Father in heaven, and are sure that their affliction is working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If they can look forward, and have a good hope of the great joy in heaven which will be their's for ever, and can know that their trials are sent to make them ready for this, they may think little of them as "light" and "but for a moment."

But there is often a great mistake made. Many seem to believe that, if they suffer on earth, they are sure to have joy when they die. They fancy that, as a matter of course, the way of sorrow is a way to heaven. There is no more sad mistake than this; and it must be feared that often those whom God tries to lead to Him "suffer many things in vain." Sorrows and cares, which were meant to purify them, and to be promises of peace hereafter, only harden them; and are, as it were, the foretastes and beginnings of the more dreadful and lasting sorrow beyond the grave.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." But, what if we sow nothing! what good will tears do us? The rain and storm would not help the farmer to a harvest, if he put no seed in the ground. Trouble is like medicine; it will be of no use if it is only in the house; we must *take*

it if we wish to be any better for it. And God teaches us that chastening, which is "not joyous but grievous," "afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby." In other words, if we are exercised or trained by the sorrows which God allows to come upon us, we shall gain righteousness; and the fruit of righteousness is peace. All other peace is a false peace, that can only lead to ruin. When we are in any trouble, we ought to ask, and see that we find out, what God wants it to do for us, and pray and strive that the work may be done as soon and as well as possible.

Sorrow and care, in themselves, do not give us any hope of peace and joy hereafter. All depends upon the use we make of them. The poor are blessed in their poverty, only if they grow like the poor man Jesus Christ, poor in spirit, rich in good works. Those who suffer pain can be happy and hopeful, if they bear it for Christ's sake, and as He bore His. It will do them good, if it makes them think of the sin that brought pain into the world and made their Saviour die, and if it points them to the Good Physician who can cure the hurts of the soul. Loss of friends will bring blessing, if it leads the heart away from earth, and gives a true feeling of the shortness of life here, and the great value of the life that is for ever, where friends do not go away, or die.

To be spoken ill of or to have the patience tried, is a means of grace, if it teaches us to look for the spirit of Him, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. It will do us good, if it makes us more humble, more ready to know our faults, and call ourselves hard names, and if it warns us against rashly speaking ill of others.

And so with all the many trials we meet with in our daily life. They need not help our souls; they will not, except we use them aright. If we care to try, we may find in every one of them a help to heaven.

SORROW AND SYMPATHY.

WHEN people are in sorrow, well-meaning friends often give them great pain. They act in kindness, but only torment the hearts they wish to heal. They speak as if pain was not pain, as if care was not care, as if the death of friends was no loss. They tell the sufferer, writhing on his bed of sickness, to be as if he did not feel it. They speak to the poor as if they ought to like starvation. They bid the widow, left alone in the cold world, or the mother, by her dead baby's cradle, to dry her tears. All this is a stupid effort of dull good-nature. It passes for sympathy, but indeed shows want of feeling. It is not a sign of religion, but proves ignorance of God.

Pain is not pleasant, and God has made us to shrink from it. We are not wrong but right to do all we can to get relief. Want is a sore trouble. Those who have had a bare table at meal-time, and have been forced to see their children hungry, know how real and hard the trouble is. It is very easy for a man, who has never had a tooth ache, to stand on his strong limbs and talk of cheerfulness to a sufferer in rheumatic fever, who cannot bear the touch of his bedclothes. It is very easy for a full fed, well clad man to tell the pale father, who has no more blankets to sell for food for his children, not to be anxious or sad. They know nothing of what they talk about.

And when death has come into a home, it is cruelty to try and rouse those whose heart-strings have been torn, and are bleeding painfully. God gave them the love which has been wounded. It is a holy thing, we must not disturb it; and we can only stop the sorrow by spoiling the love from which it comes. Those who love must grieve to part with those whom God has made dear to them. Well is it for a mother when she can weep, and

gain thus some relief for her heart, when she longs for her child and cannot find it.

Sorrow is not sin. The Lord Jesus was a Man of Sorrows. He wept with those that wept; He never rebuked their tears. And He is the same now. His sympathy is sure; His help is always ready. When He lays a cross on us, He knows how it wounds and bruises, for He has borne a cross Himself; He has sought relief "with strong crying and tears." He knows that we must feel its weight; and we are meant to feel it. We are nowhere told to like pain; but we are taught to bear our pain in faith in Him who bore so much for us, and who in His own time will show us the meaning of it all. Care is a real thing, which we must feel to be what it is; but we must try to cast our care on Him who careth for us, and find His help and comfort. Loss of friends cannot but make earth dark, and lonely; but we must try to lift our hearts after those who leave us, and be with them where we hope they are.

Man may try to comfort those who are in grief, but he cannot give comfort. Only One can do that. Christ can cheer the sad heart, and give peace even in the heaviest sorrow. He does not always take away the sorrow, but He can make the mourner strong in Him, and can bring good out of what He knows it is hard to bear.

St. Paul besought the Lord thrice that his "thorn in the flesh" might be taken from him. The Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee:" and the Apostle was made to feel that, sore as his trial was and remained, it brought him a gain worth far more than all it cost him.

Christ prayed in an agony, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." It did not pass, but an Angel came to strengthen Him: and so He was able to go on calmly towards the joy set before Him. We are not wrong when we shrink from our cross and pray to be spared, if we try to say, "Not my will but Thine be done," and try from our heart to trust God as our Father. If we *try* to do so, I say, for it is often not easy, and there is no use in saying that it is. He will help us, if we try, He will make

us sure of what we can perhaps at first only hope about. He has compassion upon our infirmities. He knows that our trials are "not joyous but grievous;" but He has His gifts of faith and patience ready to bestow. He bids us wait and trust, and in the end He will show us the meaning and the use of all.

BEARING THE CROSS, OR CRUSHED BY IT.

THERE is a cross for all. No one can help feeling the weight and sharpness of the care and the grief that are man's lot. While life lasts, the cross will press in one way or another. It is no use to try to get rid of it, or forget it, or make little of it. Men do indeed add by their own fault to its soreness. They can often, by acting wisely, do much to lighten it; but still the word remains true that man is born to trouble. As soon as he comes into the world he finds a cross ready for him.

Sinners cannot be free from sorrow. It would not be good for those to be at rest who are not holy. There is wise mercy in the arrangement that we should feel how sin and sorrow are joined, and should be led to look for a new life free from both. Were there no cross here, men would hardly be roused to seek the crown. It is well to suffer and well to die, that we may long for better things and go to them.

But what our cross does for us depends on what we do with it. Sorrow is not a good thing in itself: it is only good if used rightly, by the help of the grace which God always sends with it. We must have the cross, whether we like it or not; we can refuse or neglect the grace, if we choose. A cross either crushes us down to earth, and keeps us back from God; or else it keeps us near to Christ, and lifts us towards heaven. If we lie down under it in unbelief, or sloth, or cowardice, if we struggle impatiently against it, then we are wounded, and bruised, and

pressed down, and kept low. The cross becomes only a new temptation, a new hindrance. It finds us weak, and makes us helpless. It finds us sinful, and makes us more far from God, and peace, and purity. The impenitent thief only sinned the more when crucified close to Christ.

Christ tells us how, and how alone, to make the cross a means of grace, and a pledge of blessed life. The way is to take it up and bear it after Him. God knows our weakness, and will not let us be tried without giving, with the trial, all needful help. Sure of this, we can take for granted that each added sorrow tells of added grace. We do not let the cross fall on us, we lift it up. In willing active bowing to God's will we bear it on strongly. We look to Christ's example, and we trust in His grace, and go forward. As we see what He bore, we do not wonder that we have a cross too. As we learn His love and our sin, we endure more meekly. As we gain grace and grow like Christ, our load seems lighter; we have more strength to press on, we look forward with a clearer hope. The cross at last raises us from the world, and One is near us to whose Cross we look, and whose words tell us of being soon in Paradise with Him.

THE RIGHT CROSS.

CHRIST has said that all who go in His steps have a cross to bear. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." These are the words of Him who calls us, and who knows how only we can go with Him where He leads. Each has his cross. No one can choose what sort of cross he likes. All must take the one which God gives. Man does not know what he needs; he would often put away the best, and take one which would be of no use. A cross may hurt, and yet be in vain. Though it feel sore, it may not be what the man who bears it needs. A wise

man will not waste his strength in carrying a load and in bearing pain which leave him no better. He will seek to find the right cross which God marks as His. Even though it be more hard to bear, it will bring him gain to make up for all that. There is no cheer in a cross that leads to no crown. Far better to be tried in a worse way, and to feel that good comes from it. Many men do not fret or give way because their cross is sharp or heavy, but they put from them bitterly one that is not clean. If their cross has fallen in the mire and offends their taste, they rebel against it. To put a case. A man will be still and brave when tried by pain of body, or care of mind, or loss of friends or wealth. Ask the same man to bear with the coarse minded, and false, and rough natures of those round him, he will say it is too much. Ask him to win the rude with courtesy, to soften the ungrateful with kindness, to bear with those who misunderstand him, he will rebel. All this is wrong. We cannot lay down part of our cross. What we shrink from most may be what we need above all. We must take up our cross as a whole, or cease to be cross-bearers. And it may be that "self" in us may be strongest in this one way. Perhaps Christ knows that we cannot be taught to deny self without a cross of this kind.

Christ did more than bear the scourge and the nails. He washed the feet of Judas. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. None knew Him all His life through. His high nature was always in pain. But His love bore all. We must not say or think that we will not bear a cross which is only a little like His. He knows what pains us most. He knows how sorely we feel, and how we shrink from each part of our cross. The love that led Him to bear what He bore, ought to make us sure that He will not give us needless pain. He knows us, and He knows what each cross is. He gives the right cross to each, and for each He has the right help and grace ready.

COMFORT IN SORROW.

THERE are many thoughts of comfort good for times of sorrow. One of the greatest is that our Father on high knows all about us, and measures what we have to bear. He knows how sore is each throb of pain. He knows how lonely the world grows, as, one by one, those whom He has bound fast to our hearts are torn away. He knows how we shrink from the hard path of self-denial, in which duty often calls us. He does not make light of what it costs us to try to say, "Thy will be done." He is ready with the strength which we need for each effort, and which we have not of our own. God does not ask us to like sorrow or pain, or to call it by any other name. He asks us to take from Him the grace to trust Him, and to long, above all, that His wise loving purpose for our true good may not be hindered by our short-sighted care for present ease. It is far better to be in God's hands than in our own. We know little more than this, that He knows what is best, and that we are safe while we let Him lead us where He will, and lay on us that cross which He sees right.

TURNING TROUBLES INTO SINS.

IT is a bad thing to be shot at: it is a worse thing to be hit. It is not pleasant to be chased by a mad dog: it is a real misfortune to be caught and torn, and to go mad oneself. If men aim at us we must take care, if we can, to get out of range. We must try to make their fire harmless. If a mad dog goes by, it is foolish to get bitten, if we can help it.

So in the same way. It is a bad thing to be wronged, ill-used, slandered. It is not pleasant to be spoken to roughly and coarsely. All this is trouble. But it need not be any great loss. There may be no great harm done. Indeed it rests with ourselves whether we make this sort of trouble a loss or a gain. We may use it to drive us nearer to God, and to stir up in us a more brave, strong, calm, high spirit. We may find ourselves, when the storm has passed, more firmly rooted, better, purer, nobler. We may let God bless the trouble, and change evil into good. On the other hand, we may let Satan use it to harm and dishonour us. We may let our enemy do us deep, lasting hurt by spoiling our temper, and breaking up our faith and love.

We may lose in one short hour of anger all the grace which we have been long gathering. We may tumble down from far up a height which we have been climbing with hard persevering work.

We are not always able to hinder people from hurting our feelings, or our worldly prospects, or our good name. We can stop them from harming our souls. We can even make them useful in proving what strength of soul God gives us, and sending us to God for more grace. Are we wronged, slandered, insulted? That is bad enough: but let us take care lest we make bad worse by sinning, and give our enemy power to harm our souls. Trouble is heavy to bear, but sin is a sorer burden. It is a sort of relief to feel and say and do hard things to those who try us. But a right-minded man always is ashamed when he looks back, and sees that he has been weak and easily shaken. No one is ever sorry for having said too little when provoked, or borne insult with dignity and strength and good humour. Often a slight or wrong is not real or is not meant. Then, of course, we sin with no cause when we strike with word or deed. If the wrong be ever so real and deliberate, it is not worth while to sin about it. If we have lost money or been pained, that is no reason for risking our souls. If we must have trouble, yet, thank God, trouble need not lower us as men and women

by upsetting our self-command; and it need not lower us as Christians by forcing us to sin.

GOD OR SATAN.

WHO guides your life most—God or Satan? Who guides your religious life most? Who has greatest power over what you do, and say, and think, and the manner of it all? This is no idle question. A great many "religious" people might well ask it, and might well be ashamed and afraid of the answer which truth would give. We read in the Bible of those who "fasted for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness." There is a great deal of what goes by the name of religion which seems little more than a way of finding an outgo for the malice and littleness of man's heart. The whole life seems to be given to fault-finding and opposition. So much is this the case, that it is hard not to wonder how some men, foremost in the religious world, would feel in heaven. There is no controversy, no calling of hard names, but all is peace in heaven. What would these men find to do?

To come back to the first question. Who is the God that guides your life? Names often help to teach truth. Look at the names of God, and of Satan—the Devil.

God means good. He is the good One whose Name is Love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and He only. What it is to dwell in love St. Paul teaches us in 1 *Cor.* xiii. He who is led by the Spirit of God, is like God, good, loving to all, patient, kindly. Are you of those in whom this Spirit lives and works, proving you the children of your Father in heaven.

Satan means adversary. Devil means accuser. Those who follow Satan's lead are those whose voices are loud, whose words are hard, who stand up against their brethren, speaking evil and bitter things of them. Are you more busy in finding where you think others go wrong, than in

learning your own path of duty? Are you more earnest in opposing the work of other men in the Church, than in resisting sin's work in your own soul. Are you more quick to blame your neighbours to man than to blame yourself to God? Take care. What seems to you zeal for truth may be indeed a blind going where Satan drives you. You may be doing, not the honourable work of God's soldiers, but the dirty work of the devil's slaves. Satan comes often as an Angel of light. He even dares to come and send men out in the name of God to labour for him, the great enemy of God and man. Look well at your religion. See whether there is in it more of this Spirit of the Good One—of God who is Love, or of the spirit of the adversary and the accuser.

HEAVEN AND HELL NOW.

WE are not to think of religion as a way of escaping ruin and being saved. It is far more than a means of getting to heaven; it is a means of being made fit for heaven. The means of grace and the teaching God gives us in His Church here are to make us holy and heavenly-minded now, to help us to grow more and more what we must be, if heaven is to be our home hereafter. There is heaven now in that man who has God's Holy Spirit in him as his guide and peace and strength. There is a light and a cheer from a better world than this, which is a promise to him of the full glory yet to be. And there is hell in that man who lets the devil live in him and drive him on in ways of sin and shame. There is a burning in his soul, there is corruption in his whole being, which is an awful beginning of the pangs of the lost, who sink down in the bottomless pit of the filth of evil.

It would be no boon to the bad to be let off the doom of sin in the other life. It would be no boon to them to be admitted to heaven. In this world they show no taste or

love for the purity and holiness of heaven. All they care for is evil such as fills hell, or folly such as they must leave behind them for ever when they die. A bad man, whose soul has been trained in evil, would carry to heaven in him what would make it hell. Eternity there would be only wretchedness to him who was unprepared for its pure joys. We read of men who after a long imprisonment have been unable to bear the light of open day, and have lost their power to enjoy freedom. So he who has been all his life a slave of sin would be only pained by the light of heaven's glory, and would not care for liberty that he could not know how to use.

Religion is not only to save us from hell or win us heaven. As well might we say that an honest training was to save us from being sent to jail, or dying a felon's death. Religion is that which trains our souls in holiness, and frees them from all that is low and base and unheavenly. It fits us, in this life of trial and care, for a life of joy and rest. By it we learn now to know God by faith, and to love Him, that so we may be fit to see Him face to face hereafter. Religion brings its own joy now, even in the midst of many troubles. For it raises us up above the world. We are made, by the power of it, more and more true men and women after the pattern and plan of God. We belong to a better world. We have our treasure there, and our hearts; and little by little, day by day, we get nearer to it. We become ever more truly what we are to be. When our time of trial is past we are fixed as we are found. The Word of God speaks, "He that is holy let him be holy still, he that is righteous let him be righteous still." Those who have learned holiness, and gained God's righteousness, given from the holy nature of Jesus, shall, of course, have their safe home in heaven. They shall be placed by the goodness of God where the grace of God has made them fit to be. They are of heaven before they go there. But what of those who have refused religion, and turned away from holiness, and despised Him who would have been their righteousness? What of those who have chosen evil and lain down in uncleanness or sloth?

Religion has no help for them when the time of trial, the day of grace, has passed. What they have become they must go on being. The Word of God speaks: "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still."

I AM SO PUT ABOUT.

TROUBLE sometimes drives people to God: and sometimes when they draw near to Him from a motive that is not the highest, they find what He is, and gain from Him true love and faith. Trouble often keeps people away from God, and drives them from Him. They get soured and embittered, out of heart, almost despairing. They seem to feel that things in this life are all wrong, and that there is no use in trying to make their religious life prosper. So trouble is a great temptation, to which it is very hard not to give way.

But, surely, when we are weak that is the time when we need most the strong help of God; when friends are false or unkind, then we should lean most closely on the one sure Friend who never fails, and is always Love. When this world gives us little to cheer, and there seems small hope of good in the life we live now, we ought, with fresh earnestness, to seek the things above, to lay up treasure in heaven, and gain that light from God that cheers the darkest and most lonely earthly path. When there is need of more help than we feel we have of our own, then we ought not sullenly to try to go on by ourselves.

Many people act as if God only expected them to use means of grace and to live godly when it is quite easy, as if temptation and difficulty took away all the fault of sins and of neglect. No one has a plain course, free from trial. There is no such way to heaven. The path that leads to destruction is broad and smooth; but those who would

reach the safe place of life must press on through dangers and past foes. They must go with the Church in the wilderness as pilgrims and warriors, if they are to enjoy the quiet and plenty of the Promised Land. Those who wait to go to church, or Confirmation, or Communion, or to mend their way of life, till God makes it quite easy for them, are not likely ever to get up out of their spiritual sloth and danger.

Many people are "put about" by their own fault, either now or in the past. They must take the extra trouble religion will cost them, as their due. They must not grumble at it, but submit with humble earnestness. All have to bear a cross, and feel a yoke press on them. The only way is to face the position boldly and at once. Difficulties may be made means of grace, bringing out courage and force, and leading the soul to trust more in God. They are seldom as real or as hard to master as they seem. God helps those who ask His help and mean to use it. He is true to all who wish to be true to Him and to their own good.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

THE word "Saint" is used in the Epistles much in the same way as we use the word "Christian." In one sense all are saints who have been dedicated to God, and whom the Holy Spirit tries to lead in ways of holiness towards holiness of character. So, we were "called to be saints" when we were made members of the Church on earth. We are in the Church on earth in order that we may be trained and formed, and may grow to be saints indeed, fit to be chosen for the rest and glory of the Church above.

We have much to do with the world that we cannot see, and it has much to do with us. We may perhaps not be out of sight of it, though it is hidden from our eyes. There

are those living there whom, unless we are very thoughtless and hard, we cannot forget. We feel the influence of what they have been, nay of what we think of them as being even now. The saints on high in glory, the resting souls that wait in peace, are not parted by a gulf from us who still must watch and pray and strive.

It cheers us to think of those who have fought well, and at the end of their earthly warfare have gone to take their crown. It cheers us to mark the pattern of quiet, earnest, true lives passed in the ways where God has willed. We love to think now near to us those still may be whom God trained on earth, and has brought to a higher purity than this world knows. We are less apt to lose heart amid the failure and weakness and falsehood around us, or to lower our standard of what we feel called to reach. Men and women like ourselves, beset with foes, and dragged down by their own feebleness, have risen thus high, have mastered sin and pleased God. They seem to beckon us forward. They tell us that by the help of the same grace, we too can do all things. The triumph of the blest does not teach us only what some men have done, but what God can do who worketh all in all. We are one with them, not only as followers of the same God, but as sharers of the same life.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body," 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. "We being many are one Bread and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread." 1 *Cor.* x. 17. We are still members one of another, and members together of Christ. Our common union with Him joins us. The hand and the foot are united because the life of the one body flows into both. The branches upon the top of a great tree, that rise upwards towards the sky in the fresh clear air and sunlight, have union with those that hang close to the ground in the damp and gloom. For their life comes from one source. And so the saints in the loftiest place on high and the lowliest souls on earth live by the same Christ.

CHARITABLE OR NOTHING.

RELIGION is not a thing for show, but for use. There ought to be no room left for doubt whether we have the true real thing, or only a good-looking sham. If our religion be true, then our state now, and our hope for ever, are ground for peace and thankfulness: we are daily growing better, and daily the good things made ready for us in heaven are added to, and become worth more. If our religion be only a bad copy of what God tells us to have, then we are wasting time over what is useless and will fail us when we want it most.

All that can help us to test our religion we ought to welcome. God gives us one kind of test, and warns us in most plain, strong words to use it with care. In the thirteenth chapter of I. Corinthians we are told that, however strong our faith, however great our gifts, no matter what wonderful works we can do, these things do not prove us right with God; we are nothing if we have not charity. Charity means love, love to man for God's sake, love to God shown in our way of feeling and acting towards men. We might not be sure whether we had charity or not, so God tells us some of the signs of it which are always seen. He does not tell us all that charity can do, only some of the things it never fails to do. Of course, in one man charity may be far stronger and more full grown than in another; but everyone who has any religion worth having is at least aiming and trying his best to have in his life all these signs that he has charity in his heart.

Look at them one by one.

"Charity suffereth long." How long can you bear to be ill-used, without growing hard and revengeful? How much wrong can you suffer without losing your patience? Charity "is kind." Can you repay good for evil? Do you try to bless those who curse you? Do you try to speak good of those who slander you, and to do good to

those who harm you? Charity "envieth not." Are you able to look at others' joy and be glad about it, even while you are sorely tried? Do you try to check the rising feeling that asks why others should have more than you, or a more bright and quiet lot? Charity "vaunteth not itself." Are you careful not to boast over others, or put forward your higher gifts or powers or blessings, in a way to give pain, and make your neighbour feel humiliation? Charity "is not puffed up." Do you watch your heart, that pride and self-trust do not spoil the good of what God makes you or gives you? Charity "doth not behave itself unseemly." Do you show in all your ways, thought for others, and care for their feelings? Do you act as becomes one who knows what is the due of all men from him? Charity "seeketh not her own." Do you shun selfish grasping, and seek the welfare of your neighbours, doing to all as you would feel it right that you should be done by? Charity "is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." Are you slow to feel hurt, and take offence, and let loose anger at those who seem to wrong you in word or deed? Are you slow to think that men mean to wrong you, giving men credit for being fair and true and kindly, till you are forced sorrowfully to change your mind? Charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Are you afraid of the bad joy some feel when they find out evil, and have some tale of sin to tell? Are you grieved that God is wronged and man is harmed by each wrong done? Are you glad when characters are cleared, when men turn from paths of sin, and own the value and bow to the authority of the truth? Charity "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Do you try to take what grief comes to you through men, as trial that could not be if God did not let it be, and to bear it calmly? Are you ready to believe what you hear of good about others, and to believe the best view of them to be the just one? Are you anxious, even if there be no sign of good, to hope that there is good hidden, and that what seems so bad is yet not so bad as it looks? Are you doing what you can to keep calm and gentle under wrong, to endure, as seeing Him

who is invisible, and to win even your foes, overcoming evil with good?

This is a great deal to aim at; it sounds hard. But if we are aiming at less, God says that He will not have us, and that we have no part in Him. Charity never does less; without charity we are nothing. We think perhaps that it is no use our trying to show a character so rare as these words paint. If this character is rare, then religion which is of any use is rare, for there is no true religion where a man rests without this character. We cannot, by ourselves, reach this high point, or even take the smallest steps upward towards it. But it is Charity in us that does all this. Charity is love. Love is God. God can work in us to will and do of His good pleasure. His good pleasure is to heal the wounds of man and fill the world with peace and brightness.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.

IT is right to love ourselves. It is taken for granted that we do. We are put into our own special care, and are bound to seek our highest good. The duty is taught us in all that enforces on us those rules of life and conduct which have to do with our well-being. Care for ourselves is also a part of care for our neighbour. If we neglect ourselves we not only fail in power of helping others, but we become a burden to them. We show true self-love, not by letting every wish and desire have its way, but often by firm denial of our inclinations, in order that we may not risk the loss of that true good which we have set before us. We show true self-love often by yielding our own wishes for the sake of others. Self-love is not selfishness. The selfish man acts on the false view that what others gain is a loss to him, or is indifferent. He is jealous, envious, grudging. He, on the other hand, who has true self-love, will find the good of his neighbour help his own. He will wish from

God for others what he seeks for himself. He will do his part in helping those who are members with Him of one Body. When we bear one another's burdens, and are patient with one another's faults of character, we fulfil the law of Christ, and we do ourselves good by drawing into ourselves more of the Spirit of Christ.

Many honest hearts are made sad because they cannot feel toward all neighbours what the commandment seems to them to claim. They mistake its meaning. It does not tell us to have the same warm affection towards all. It does not bind us to like the company of all, or to admit them to friendship or even acquaintance. It does bid us have a thoughtful care for the well-being of all, and a readiness to show this care in deeds of goodwill. So, we can have a love of this sort, even where personal affection is out of the question, and there is everything to make us shrink from any approach to intimacy. We are not bound to love all as we love our friends. We are bound to love all as those for whose good our Saviour was content to die. Christ loved all. But He loved not all with one form of love. He loved His Mother, His chosen three, the rest of His disciples, the faithful followers, the simple people, the publicans and sinners, the Scribes and Pharisees; but He did not love them all in the same way.

WHILE YOU CAN.

NONE of us can count on the length of our own life, or of the life of any of our friends. We cannot tell how soon we may be out of one another's reach, in different worlds. Who does not know the sadness of looking at the dead face of one whom we loved with a love the strength of which we have learned at last, and feeling that it is now too late to show love as we would? We might have eased the burden of life's care, we might have given more gladness to the lot, we might have shown more plainly the kindness

that we felt, had we taken more pains and been more ready. If we could only have him back for a little time, how much we should do, and with what unselfish earnestness! And do not all who feel aright look back on past years as more or less lost years—years in which much might have been done to bring good and cheer to others, which can never be done now.

Regrets are vain, if they only deal with the past and make us sad. They are not vain, if they rouse us for the future. Each friend is a dying friend, on whom, each day, we should do our best to bestow all kindness. We are dying; the days go from us quickly. The night cometh soon, in which we can do no more good, as mortals among mortals. What we can do and be to make any life happier, any soul better, any trial less, any temptation easier to overcome, let us do and be now. We dare not put off till to-morrow, if we remember that when to-morrow comes it will bring its own new claims, and we may be parted, by what parts the living and the dead, from those to whom we are called to show kindness.

CHARITY SHALL COVER THE MULTITUDE OF SINS.

THESE words, which we find in the eighth verse of the fourth chapter of St. Peter's first Epistle, are quite misunderstood by many people. They think that Charity means open-handedness, and that by giving freely to those in want, or to what are called "charitable objects," they cover from God's sight, or persuade God not to look at, a multitude of their sins. Of course, people who know anything of Holy Scripture, do not fall into such ignorant mistakes as this. They know that they may give all their goods to feed the poor, and yet have no charity. Men who give only for the sake of their own souls, are not proved to be loving, but selfish. They know, also, that doing

right in one way does not at all make up for doing wrong in other ways. He that offends in one point, choosing in that one point to set up his will against God's will, is guilty of breaking God's law as a whole.

But what does this text mean? The words that go before help to make it clear. "Have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The twelfth verse of the tenth chapter of the Proverbs teaches a like lesson. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." The meaning plainly is that the charitable and loving do not like to see or look at their neighbours' faults; they think no evil, they believe all things that are good, they hope the best; so they draw a veil over much that is or seems wrong, and the peace and friendliness of the world are not spoiled.

Those who have done wrong are often more ready to repent and make amends, if they are left to themselves and God. They are often made hard and defiant, if their faults are dragged before the world and shown to everyone.

Some people are like flies, that love to find and settle on a sore place. They talk of their neighbours' sins, and point them out; they stir up strifes, spreading the first mischief, which might have healed quickly if they had let it alone. Those who have love, that is who have religion, rejoice not in iniquity, and are unwilling to see evil or to think hardly of others. They are silent about their neighbours' faults, except when duty makes them speak. They try not to see a great deal that proves their friends to be imperfect.

TRY AND DO.

MANY people complain that they can't do things, when the truth is that they won't. What they really mean is that what they are told to do, and know they ought to do, needs care or trouble, which they are not ready to take.

They want God to make it quite easy to do right, and to remove all temptations which might mislead them. They want God to shut up all ways but the narrow way, and to make that way quite easy to find and pleasant to walk in. They want God, not only to give them means of learning truth, but to teach them without asking for any effort of study or thought. They want God not only to give them grace, but keep it theirs without any watching on their part. They want God not only to arm them, but to fight with the weapons He gives, while they look on. They want God not only to show them the steps of Christ and give them strength to follow, but to carry them on after the Saviour till they are safely where He is.

They do more than this; they lay the blame of their faults on God, saying that He has so made them, or so placed them, that they cannot do what they want very much to do, and would do, if God only did His part as truly as they are ready to do theirs.

It is not grace that men need, it is will to use the grace they have, and to get more grace that they may use it. To deny this is to make God the cause of all the failure and sin of sinners. God gives brains and limbs for us to use. God gives grace for us to use. A man's hands will not work of themselves, nor will his brains, unless he set them to work by the force of his will. So it is with his supernatural powers. Man can do all the work which God sets him; for God sets no man to work for which He does not give him power.

One man mourns that he cannot get up in the morning, and that so his prayers are left out or hurried over, and his whole day is spoiled. He asks advice and prayers. The only thing to say to him is "Get up; you are not tied down to your bed; you don't surely expect God to send an angel to lift you out of bed like a baby, or to make you wide awake by a miracle." Another says he cannot resist the temptation of drink, and makes himself out to be an object of mere sympathy, as a sufferer, who wants to be sober, but cannot be. The only thing to say to him is "Don't drink. God does not wish you to be a drunkard;

He wishes you to be what He tells you to be. You are resisting Him and refusing His grace whenever you give way to the temptation. You are not forced to go where drink is sold; the drink is not forced down your throat. You will to go, and to drink. Simply will *not* to go, and you are sure to find the strength of God in you enabling you to do right."

So it is with other things. All that a man ought to do he can do; for if it is God's will that he should do it, it is God's will also that he should be made able. No one finds out the power he has till he tries. God does not give grace for us to hoard up idly and be proud of possessing. Very often He gives special help only for the hour in which we need it, and only as the need of it arises. We have it not when we rise to do the work to which God calls us: as we set to work we find the needful power in us.

COMMON SENSE.

"I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

THE lies by which Satan keeps men from religion are not often very clever or artful lies. They need not be; for men are easily taken in about religion. It seems as if those things which have most to do with their greatest good are the things about which men care least to use their brains and common sense. They will not put their heads to work, and try to get at the truth about questions which bear on eternity. They take chance, and run risks, as if their souls were of small worth, and it did not matter much whether they were lost or saved. Men who would take no rest till they proved the goodness of a five-pound note which looked doubtful, will take for granted with hardly a thought, that they have good hope of wealth in heaven.

Take one case. How many men live on, getting nearer

to death day by day, but quite easy in looking forward, on the ground that, as they think, they do no wrong to anyone, and are not like the black, God-daring sinners round them. Now, of course, it is a good and a blessed thing to be clear of what is called vice or crime. He may well thank God who does not know himself a drunkard, or a liar, or a thief, or a man of impure life. So far good, but is this enough? Is there in this what gives a man a right to feel that he is on the road to heaven? Will the plea "I live an honest and a decent life among my neighbours," stand testing as a ground of hope for heaven? Will it bear to be held up to the light, and looked through?

We doubt it, when we remember that a right-minded man would do all this, for his own sake, even were there no God, and no life but the life here. A man need not have any religion, or any thought beyond care for his own welfare and his own self-respect, to keep him on his guard against vice and crime. If he values his health, if he wants to get on in the world, and to hold up his head without his heart telling him that he is a rogue, he must keep clear of vice and crime.

Again, try the plea, "I do no one any harm," in other matters. Do men act on it in ruling their families? Are they content if their children keep from things forbidden? Do they call them good children if they only neglect what they are told to do? Is idleness no fault? Is carelessness about showing due honour felt to be no wrong? Is the denial of love no source of grief? We are God's children. He sets us tasks. He gives us things to do. He asks for our love and honour. Does He care if we refuse Him, and all the while flatter ourselves that we are quite as good as we need be?

Again, will the plea do in the case of a citizen? Is it enough not to rob or kill, or break laws against crime? Are there not duties and taxes which the government claims, and will enforce? Is there not more asked from those who have the benefit of the state's protection, than to keep from cheating or murdering their neighbours?

We belong to the kingdom of heaven, and if we would

not lose our rights in it and be cast out, we must fulfil the conditions which God, the King, lays down. If we enjoy His care and bounties, does not common sense tell us that He looks for some acknowledgment? He will not think it enough that we keep from doing what would bring us under the lash of the law or of public scorn.

There are two sorts of commandments. Some begin with "Thou shalt not," others with "Thou shalt." Those who wilfully break either, sin. Those who let themselves be persuaded that either can be broken without sin, are not only sinful, but stupid. Something is wrong with their brains, as well as with their consciences.

A GOOD START IN LIFE.

TWO Frenchmen made up their minds to go to America, after five years. They both reached America; but they landed with very different prospects. During those five years the same opportunities had been within reach of both; but they had not been used by both in the same way. So, when they came to the land which was to be their home for the rest of life, one had a good start, and knew how to go forward; the other had to begin from the beginning, in scenes quite new, and among people whose ways and language were strange.

The first, as soon as his plans were fixed, and he knew that in a few years he would find himself in a strange country, set to work to fit himself to take his place in it. He read all he could about the laws and customs of those who lived there, and the way to rise to high, good place among them. He learned the language. He talked with those who knew more than he did about the country, and who had an interest in it. He tried, as far as he could, to gain habits which would suit his new life. He worked hard, and denied himself, that he might lay up capital, and have it safely banked, waiting for his use.

The other worked on in France, as if he was to stay there always. He spent in pleasure all he earned. When people asked him if it were true that he meant to go to America, he said, "O yes; I hope to be there when my time at home is over, and I hope to be done with all the care and trouble that vex me here, and to find rest and happiness." But no one could see any signs in him of any wish for the change, or any value for the advantages he seemed to believe in. He kept out of the way of those who could give him information and help. He laughed at those who spoke the language of the far-off country, and followed any of its customs. At last the time drew near when he must sail. He could not put off the day, or get back any of the time that had been misspent and wasted. The chance would be lost for ever, if he could not manage to be ready by the time fixed. He set to work earnestly. Night and day he laboured, and called to him all help within his reach. He grieved for his folly and neglect, and upbraided himself as alone to blame. He did manage just not to fail. By the kind aid of those who pitied him, he got together enough for his passage. He was landed safely, but in a state how unlike what might have been!

So it is when men who look forward to a time when earth must be left and a new life begin. All count on heaven as the scene of their hereafter. Most men seem to think that if only they reach its shores all will be well, and that nothing more is to be wished for. So they let this world and the days that pass use all their time and thought and toil. They spend what they have, laying up no treasure for the time to come. They speak only of the things of the world, and only in the language of the world. They take no pains to grow fit for the life that they hope to live for ever. They never ask what place they can gain among the citizens of the better country. It seems enough if, a few weeks or days before the long journey must be taken, they turn their thoughts to heaven, and call out for help, and beg for what will bring them there.

All that we learn leads us to be sure that there are

ranks and degrees in the Kingdom of God on high as well as in the kingdoms of this world. There are the rich and the poor, the noble, and those of low estate. For some shall in God's mercy be found trained for higher place, and fit for posts of honour and authority. Some shall have laid up larger treasure in heaven through earnest use of talents trusted to them; some shall have been made more like their Lord by bearing his yoke and cross in His strength. To get to heaven is not all. Men who have a right ambition will long to make a good start. They will seek to do on earth what can be done here; to become on earth all that Divine grace enables them to be; to learn all truth and to gain all grace within man's reach now. They will try to be faithful in all the few things given to their trust, and to grow "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," that the work given them to do on earth being finished, they may take the high place of honourable duty prepared for them in heaven.

A BLESSED TIME.

A FARMER lay on his death-bed. He had been long ill, and his sickness was a lingering one, which would slowly, though surely, wear away his life. A friend came to see him, and, after the usual greetings, said, "What a blessed thing it is that you have such a fine time to prepare!" The dying man replied, with weak voice, but in tones of deep, strong feeling: "Ah! it is a far more blessed thing for you to have such a fine time to prepare, while you are in health and strength."

So everyone thinks, who tries, in time of pain and sickness, to find what he has not yet found, and to learn what is a new language and a new science. It is a great mercy when a man is stopped in his sin, and called out of the noise of the world, and the hurry of work, to be alone in quiet with his own soul and God, before he dies. It is a

great mercy, when a sinner is brought, by degrees, towards the dark valley, and is not plunged in a moment, from a state of carelessness, into the awful realities of the eternal world that he has forgotten. But, after all, what can be done upon a death-bed? Those who have lain helplessly at the edge of life, and have been restored, know how hard it is even to trim the lamp, and how almost hopeless it would be to try to light it, if it were gone out, or had never been lit. Many are carried off before there is time for thought, and find out their state when they have passed to the world beyond. Many have but few hours of consciousness after sickness lays them low. Many are so torn with pain, or so anxious about crowding cares, that they can scarcely think. Often those who have loved God most, and walked most faithfully, find clouds hide the heavens, in their last hours, and need all their sure faith in the unchanging God, to uphold them in the darkness.

And, at best, there is no time for more than the first steps in the Christian life. A man may learn something of his sinfulness and some of his sins; he may remember his wronged and forsaken Father; he may turn to the Saviour, and bow himself in shame and hope before the Cross; he may pray for, and yield to, the Holy Spirit. But how can he make any effort to undo the evil influence of his bad example? How can he warn back those whom he has led astray? How can he follow Christ, in a pure life, before the world? How can he let the light of good works shine before men, that they may glorify God? How can he set a pattern of the true, noble life which man is called, as a son of God, to live? How can he train his nature, under the guidance, and by the grace, of the Holy Spirit, from childhood to life's end? Time gone cannot be brought back; opportunities lost can never be made use of; the unfulfilled duties of past years can never be fulfilled; harm done, and sins committed can never be as if they had not been.

And, if men could know it, life without God now, on earth, is in one sense as dreadful as life without Him in the world to come. It is a state of perishing, of gradual corruption of the soul, and loss of all that is man's true

blessedness and dignity. When those who have striven with sin and sought after holiness die, they do not become something they were not before; they find out what they have, by God's good grace, been. So, when those who have resisted God and drawn nigh to evil die, they only find out the state in which they have been content to live. Death does not make them wicked; it shows them what they are.

It is a "blessed thing" to use well the time of health and strength, when the mind is clear, and the will is strong, and the heart is unhardened, and the powers are active. Then truth can be learned, grace can be laid hold of, God's love can be welcomed, the truths of the Gospel can move the nature, and work can be done to bring God praise.

It is a sad and awful thing to know that the end of a godless or careless life is near, and to find out then what an awful God has been defied, and must be met. It is a sad and awful thing for one, who has any heart left, to find out what love has been grieved, and to learn the meaning of the Cross for the first time, when all life has been spent in trampling under foot the Blood shed upon it. It is a sad and awful thing, even when the penitent soul has been by a miracle of mercy drawn out of the ways of sin, to feel that it is too late to undo the wrongs of a life against the Divine love.

THE HEAVENLY LIFE.

WE all hope to live in heaven, to have a share in the fulness of joy and the pleasures for evermore. We ought to try to think of those joys, and to ask how far we are fitted to enjoy them. What is joy for one man has no attraction for another. He who would be happy must not only have some things and be somewhere; he must be something himself, so that his possessions and his condition may give him pleasure. The uneducated man has no

delight in literature; the unmusical is wearied by sweet harmonies; gross and vulgar indulgences have no charm for the refined and the devout. So, in order that heaven may be a place of joy, we must be heavenly-minded.

We cannot picture much of those things which are beyond the power of man's thoughts. We see by faith, and are told of these things in figure. But still we may know how far we are fit or unfit to enjoy the rest and the rapture which God prepares.

The delights of heaven are prepared in God's presence for those who love Him. Does love to God make us seek the presence of God now, so far as it can be realised? Are we glad when we are called to draw near, in the ways in which we may even in the Church on earth? Does the power of the love of God rouse in us a love to Him, which makes us long to know Him better, that we may give Him more of our heart's devotion? If there be a shrinking from His Presence, a coldness in which we are willing to remain, how can we hope that the mere passing through death will change us wholly, and make us able to find eternal blessedness in what we have no taste or love for now?

BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

THOSE who live together are meant to do one another good. There are many ways in which they can do this. They can cheer one another by kind looks and words and acts. They can lighten one another's cross, and help to bear the yoke of duty that is laid on each. There is a way, not so plain, but as real. There must be times when opinions differ, when selfishness shows its power, when tempers seem unreasonable. This is a discipline of patience and wisdom; it is a test of grace; it brings out the firmness of the Christ-like character. He wins a great victory who can choke down the rising word of vexation,

and force the gentle answer and the quiet look, and so overcome evil with good. This is indeed strength: to keep his own spirit in control, to gain over the angry, to check the course of sin, and preserve peace. There must be mutual forbearance, if family love is not to be worn out and the happiness of home lost. People must remember that they are not perfect themselves, and that they have no right to look for perfection in others. It would, of course, be well if all could keep their tempers always; but the next best thing is that only one should be out of temper at a time. To stir a fire is not the best way to put it out.

RELIGION AT HOME.

IF a man wants to know what he is, he can find it out pretty well by watching himself for a few days when he is at home. He cannot judge himself at all by what he shows himself to the world. He cannot guess how far he is kind and thoughtful and courteous by what his companions in pleasure or his business acquaintances find him. These people have him more or less in their power, and will avoid him, or make his life very uncomfortable, if he is coarse and ill-mannered. He must, for his own sake, be on his good behaviour when he goes from under his own roof. When he comes home, then he is tested. How does he look and speak and act with those who are in his power, whose love he takes for granted, with whose patience he can take liberties, who dare not retaliate, who cannot leave him? What is his manner with his parents, his wife, his brothers and sisters, his children? Do they find him what he likes to be thought by those outside, whose good will and good word he wants to win or keep?

Charity begins at home. It ought to do so. The practice of the small courtesies of life is a part of charity, without which no man, whatever his wealth or rank, has

a right to the name of Christian or gentleman. That which is all spent out of doors, and on the members of other men's families, is a worthless imposture. If a man cannot be kind and well-mannered, he is to be pitied; but if he can, surely those who bear his name and share his home have the strongest and first claim. He would not allow anyone else to be rude to his mother or sisters; what right has he to be so himself? He ought to show at least as much respect for his own mother as for other people's mothers. He ought to be as thoughtful and polite to his own sisters as to the sisters of his friends. He insults himself if he treats his wife as if she had no claim to the courtesy which he shows, as a matter of course, to his neighbour's wife.

People who only meet men from home, would often wonder could they see them at home. Many a girl would be saved from a sad marriage could she see the man who wants to win her when he goes back to his mother and sisters. She would know the value of the refined manner and thoughtful gentleness that mask the ugly vulgarity of a bully and a coward. She would understand what she might expect, when he had grown accustomed to her as his drudge and slave, on whom his ill-temper might be safely let loose, and who might be set to any work he pleased, without any ceremony or any thanks.

Men often make wretched the lives of those they live with, and risk the loss of love which ought to be most dearly prized, through want of thought and kindness. They also lose the training which home life should give them. Home makes them more selfish and coarse, instead of refining and strengthening their better natures. They do not think of the pain they give by gruff words and looks, and by want of right regard for feelings which affection makes quick to feel. But they ought to think. Except they have no brains or no hearts they are without excuse. One dead fly makes the ointment stink. So this one fault makes a man's religion and refinement loathsome. He may be regular in private and family prayers, a constant churchgoer and communicant, a well-known worker for charities,

blameless in outward life and manner before the world; yet this does not prove him right before God; it ought not to satisfy himself. What is he with his mother, his wife, his sisters, his little children? The answer to this question may prove him vulgar, coarse, and without any real religion that God Almighty counts worth having.

FAULTS ON BOTH SIDES.

ONE Sunday morning, the curate of a wealthy parish preached on faults of temper. He specially dealt with those which spoil the joy and peace of home life. On his way from church one of the leading members of the congregation met him, and said, "I am going to make a strange request, but I hope you will pardon me. I was very much struck with your sermon this morning, and was very sorry that Mrs. M. was not at church. She has a very unfortunate temper, and I wish greatly that she had heard you. If you will lend me the sermon, I shall be most thankful." After about two months, Mr. M. brought back the sermon, and spoke very warmly about the good he hoped it might do, adding that he was so anxious that Mrs. M. might read it without trouble, that he had copied it out plainly for her. When the curate was leaving the parish, he paid a farewell visit at Mrs. M.'s house. Mrs. M. said to him, "We have something of yours, which we have no right to keep without your permission; I mean the copy of your sermon. It would be a great favour if you would allow us to keep it. I assure you it is much wanted in this house."

Mr. M. thought his wife needed admonition about her temper, and Mrs. M. thought her husband needed warning about his. Neither seemed aware that the fault was on both sides, and that the only hope was for each to amend self and to bear with the other. It is hoped that the sermon helped them both.

The same curate, some years after, was visiting in a poor parish. He asked a working man how his brother was. "Ah," was the reply, "I do feel for that brother of mine; he's got such a Turk of a wife. I thought he'd have had to go to the hospital through her last week." "Why," said the clergyman, "what did she do to him?" The answer was unexpected. "She aggravated him so, that he nearly put his shoulder out striking at her!"

The wife "aggravated" the husband. The husband, instead of showing himself wise and strong, struck at her, and, missing his blow, nearly dislocated his shoulder. His pain seemed to him all his wife's fault. The "aggravation" was probably the fruit of old quarrels and blows. It led to fresh blows; these to fresh "aggravations." And so the wedding promises were kept! so the hopes of the days before marriage were fulfilled! So man and wife went on sinking, in the eyes of themselves, and of each other, and of their children! They each thought their own crossness and violence justifiable, but had no patience with the least failure in the other's gentleness. Each wanted the other to be perfect, while they took no trouble about the heart and life, which it was in their power, by the grace of God, to change.

SOULS AND BODIES.

GOD calls us to serve Him with body and with spirit. Both are God's work, and are made for God's use. One is put into our care, as well as the other. We are bound to keep both in good order. Where either is neglected, there is a want in the full service claimed for God. And this is true of that part which is cared for, as well of that which is not. For a man is one; and the parts of which he is made up act together, and hinder or help one another.

When the body is weak and languid, or diseased, the

spiritual part of man must more or less feel with it. The mind cannot think with the same freedom; thoughts are turned on self. If the mind do keep some vigour, the body is not ready to do its bidding: it needs to be driven, instead of acting freely and with hardly a conscious effort. And new temptations crowd. Sloth and self-indulgence call themselves duties. Sins of temper seem things of course, and claim to be excused. All temptations of the flesh and of the devil come most strongly.

Many live as if they were only body. They feed and dress and guard their earthly part, but leave all else to take its chance; no matter how that fares and looks in the sight of God. But there are those who forget that it is, in one way, just as plain a duty to care for the body as to care for the soul. Some, indeed, have thought that their weakened bodies were proof that their souls were strong.

A man may, it is true, do well in sacrificing health and strength for the sake of others; he may wear himself out in work which would be left undone did he not do it; he may go where disease and death seem to wait for him, just as a soldier goes into battle. But most of the waste of power through bad health is due either to man's thoughtlessness or his self-indulgence; not at all, or not chiefly, to any highminded following of duty. Men do not learn, or do not act upon, the common laws of health. They do things, or neglect to do things, which they know quite well are likely to make them less fit for work, or more open to temptations.

For instance, many people eat and drink more than is good for them, or what they know will do them harm. They like what is set before them; and to please their palate, they damage their digestions and confuse their brains. It is not wrong to like one's food: God has made it pleasant to eat and drink, and no one need be ashamed to say that he is glad God has not made taking meals a mere duty. Moreover, it is right to thank God for the least sinless pleasure that He gives us, whether it be in the scent of a flower, or the beauty of a landscape, or the taste of a fruit. We must not affect to be too good and

spiritual to care whether things are pleasant or nauseous. But it is plain sin to please our appetite in a way that is likely to make us cross and drowsy, and to force us to spend time and thought and money in getting our bodies put right.

Again: many are careless about cleanliness of house, clothes, and person. I do not speak now of the want of self-respect shown, or the want of charity to their neighbours whom they offend, or the want of reverence for the Holy Spirit whose temple their body is. I only point out that dirt invites disease, and that if they do not remove thoroughly what is always dying away from their bodies, they are sure to fail in vigour for the duty given them to do in life.

Again: many are content to breathe dirty air, and air that is even full of deadly poison. They do not let fresh air in, or foul air out. At night they shut all the doors and windows, stop up the chimney, and put sandbags over every chink. In the morning they can hardly get out of bed. They think they are tired from not having enough sleep and rest. So they lie longer, and when they do rise they are languid, drowsy, and ill-humoured. The fact is, they have been almost poisoned by foul air, breathed over and over again, and almost drained of what can support life.

Again: people catch cold and neglect colds from sheer thoughtlessness or laziness. Then they become unpleasant to themselves and others, even if they do not throw themselves into bad illness which makes them useless in the world, except as a means to bring out the love and patience and self-denial of their friends.

Good people often need to be reminded that they have bodies as well as souls, and that, in this world, both must be in order if they are to work well together. We are bound to do our duty to God and our neighbour, and we are bound to think of those things that help or hinder us in this doing. If "without charity we are nothing," we must beware of what is likely to make us selfish and ill-tempered. Many a man has repented bitterly over a

week's surliness which has made all near him wretched, and has not thought that this repentance should have begun at the sin of eating something which he knew would upset him.

SPOILING THE MACHINERY.

A FACTORY boy was lately brought before the magistrates, with a heavy charge against him. He had put a small piece of iron between the cog-wheels in the machinery. As soon as the engine was set going there was a shock and a crash. Costly parts of the machinery were broken and spoiled. He who had done the mischief could not undo it. He could neither mend, nor pay for mending the damaged property of his master. Nor could he give back the time or the wages lost to many hands while things were being put right. The boy deserved punishment, and he got it. Very few people would have cared to beg him off.

There is a sin very like what he did, which few people think to be a sin at all, but which seems to be very plainly a wrong against God, our neighbours, and ourselves. It is a very common sin, and perhaps does as much slow, sure harm as any other. I mean the sin of eating or drinking more than is good for us, or what is bad for our health. Drunkenness, of course, is such a waste of soul, and mind, and body, that no one need put any name on it to prove its deadliness. But what I am speaking of may be quite as real a foe to man. There are those who scorn a drunkard, who themselves are barely ever quite free from the effects of thoughtless eating or drinking, or who every now and then are unfit to do their work well, because they have taken pleasant unwholesome food. Most of the bad health which makes men ill-tempered and sour and wretched, a grief to themselves and a pest to their families, is brought on by their own act. Now, there is more or

less real pleasure in eating and drinking; but God has given us brains to guide us. We soon find out how much is good for us, and what things harm our health. Unwholesome things are often pleasant. It may be sometimes hard to stop when we have had enough. But it is strange that men do not see that the pleasure of eating and drinking does not at all make up for the misery and often danger that follow from excess.

There is, moreover, a religious way of looking at the matter. We are machines of very wonderful make, planned by God, put into the world by Him, to do work for Him, for mankind, and for ourselves. We are easily put out of order. Great care is needed that we may work well, and not be spoiled. In another way; we are part of a great machine, and we have to work up to the other parts, and move smoothly. If we over eat or over drink, if we take what clogs any part of us, we are like the boy who put the piece of iron between the wheels of the engine. All goes wrong at once. We do harm to God's machine. We spoil and hinder God's work. We put the whole set of machinery, of which we are a part, out of order. Why are there so many dull brains, weak and heavy limbs, broken-down constitutions, peevish, fretful tempers in the world? Why do so many sink, after useless lives, into early and unhonoured graves? Why are so many unfit for the work and joys of life, and unable to realise hopes of heaven? Watch men, and the secret of much of the evil will be plain. Men sell true high joy here and hope for hereafter for the sake of a little passing pleasure of the lowest sort. A little more to eat, a little more to drink; something which they know will upset their health. They cannot deny their greedy flesh. So flesh and spirit both pay the cost.

This sort of sin is little thought of, but it is a sin not less to be feared because men do not fear it. It is one of the most common sins, and one of the most deadly. Even were it no sin, it would be one of the greatest follies. Nothing lowers man's nature more than being the daily slave of any mere animal lust. No habit takes the force

more out of a man, or spoils him more, or stops his getting on in life: even drunkenness has fewer victims. But it is more than folly, it is bad sin in itself. And it weakens man, and makes him an easy prey for many a low temptation.

When we are asked about work not done, or done badly, or about work of others which we have harmed or hindered, it will not do to say to God, "I spoiled the machine by my own fault."

ASHAMED.

IT is a very strange thing that any man should be laughed at for being religious. It is very sad, and even more strange, that any man should mind being so laughed at. But as a fact, there is in man some wrong-headedness, or wrong-heartedness, which makes him try to seem what is shameful, and ashamed of being thought what is true and noble. It is quite common for men to boast of standing on Satan's side, and to hide any right feeling they have towards God, as if it were a disgrace.

Think about it, and see what is the meaning of this strange shame. Is it any disgrace for a man to take care lest he maim and sicken and kill his soul, guarding against what hurts and harms and weakens and puts it to death? Is it any disgrace to choose heaven rather than hell, to prefer joy to despair?

Is it any disgrace for a man to try to keep his soul clean from the stain of evil, and to live a high, pure life? Is it any disgrace for a man to use his mind and conscience and will to hold in check and guide his animal desires, to master them and not let them master him?

Is it any disgrace for a man to use that power of holding converse with God which sets him above the lower animals? If God bends down His ear to man, need man be ashamed to look up and speak to God? If God loves man and asks

for his heart, need man think it a dishonour to return his Maker's love.

Is it any disgrace for man to own what he owes to God, and to make what return he can? If God has made us and keeps us alive, and has sent Christ to die for us, is it any disgrace to be thankful? Need men be ashamed of showing that they know how much God has done and is doing for them? Need men be ashamed that they are not so base as to forget kindness and treat a friend with scorn?

Is it any disgrace to be known as one who claims kindred with God, and tries to live as a son of the King of heaven ought? If God is not ashamed to call us His children, how can we be ashamed to own Him as our Father? Our one true glory is this, that we belong to a higher world, where home and friends are, and where God longs to bring us. Why think that there is any shame in letting this truth influence our life?

Be ashamed, if you are so careless as to throw away your soul's health or joy or life, if you go in the way of things that bruise and kill. Be ashamed, if you have no shrinking from the dirt of sin, if you let your conscience sleep and your will lie idle, while one or another low lust takes its own bad way, as if God had made them your master. Be ashamed, if your soul finds enough on earth, and never longs for heaven and thirsts for God. Be ashamed if, when God calls, you turn away, as if fearing to be seen in your Maker's company. Be ashamed, if you use what God gives day by day, and hope at last to be saved by Christ's work, and yet speak and act as if in debt to Him for nothing. Be ashamed, if you like better to be thought a slave of Satan than a son of God.

DUTY.

OUR duty is what is due from us—what we owe—what can be claimed from us by right. We have duty to

God, to our neighbours, and to ourselves. Some duties come from what we are, and from the place in the world where we find ourselves, with no choice of our own. Some duties we undertake by a free act of our will, and we are not free to neglect them or give them up. We are bound to many things simply because we are God's creatures, living on His bounty, owing all our hope to His grace and help. We are bound to many things as members of families and nations, and also as thinking beings, who know right from wrong, and who can find out, if we like, what we are meant to do, and how to do it. But over and above these duties, we all have in various ways given God or our neighbour new rights in us. We have stepped into places of Christian work, or we have married, or by some other act of our own brought ourselves into fresh responsibility.

Carelessness about duty is very like carelessness about truth, and there is no worse sign of the times than the loose way in which men treat the claims of duty. A want of earnestness and thoroughness spoils the good of much that is done. A great deal is not done at all. Duties are undertaken thoughtlessly, and laid aside lightly. I speak now more specially of duties which people may think themselves free to undertake or not, such as teaching, or helping in any Church work. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. But many who hold back are not as free as they fancy, and are bound both to vow and pay. He who begins any work for God may think he does nothing serious; but God is not to be trifled with. To touch His work, or have any voice or hand in the things of His kingdom, is high honour and heavy responsibility. Even though there has not been at first a worthy feeling of this, the soldier's duty is no less because he has enlisted without counting all the cost.

Some people fall into grave error, and act most foolishly about these duties. They seem to think that they pay the Almighty a great compliment by doing some little work for Him with the powers He gives them. Or they think they put their clergyman, or whoever is set over them, under

heavy obligation, and bind him to treat them so as to feed their vanity and self-importance. So whenever they think there is any failure in the honour due to them, they take huff, and do what amounts to saying to Almighty God that they won't any longer work for Him, because one of His servants has offended them.

Other people are quite faithful to duties which are pleasant, or bring them into notice, or do not clash with their convenience. But they have no scruple about throwing a whole Sunday-school into disorder, by neglecting their class, when it is a wet day, which tempts them to stay at home, or a very fine day, which tempts them to take a walk. And when they get tired of plodding on in a task that has small excitement in it, they drop away.

Now life is a serious thing, and duty is a serious thing. We cannot pick and choose in doing our duties, any more than in paying our money debts. Two good rules will help us. 1. Find out clearly what is duty, and do it because it is duty. 2. Take good care that the duties which cost trouble, or need hard self-denial, or humble pride, are done; the pleasant duties which men praise us for doing, or which we delight in, will, as a rule, take care of themselves.

WORKING WITH GOD.

WHAT should be the uppermost thought as we watch the onward march of knowledge and the daily growth of the power man searches and toils for? Surely all points to God, who leads His child day by day a little farther on among new wonders, and who gradually trusts him to handle costly instruments and mighty engines, and teaches him to watch His work and share it.

The work that has its reward in harvest is perhaps that in which God's part and man's are each most plainly seen. Go abroad in the fields when the corn is ripe for the sickle. Look at the level stretch of countless plants, each bearing

its little load of grain. What labour and skill have earned this result! How many sorts of work, what care and watching have combined since these rich fields were cold rush-grown wastes or unwholesome forests! How much has been done since the last crop was reaped! Here is man's triumph! The earth does his bidding, and yields its fruit as he teaches it. Yes, so far true; but there is more. There is another way of looking at the matter, not less honouring to man, but more so. Man did not make the plants of corn, nor the soil, nor the light and warmth and moisture on which they feed. God bade these things be. The earth brought forth fruit of itself. God taught man to use this fruit for his support. He gave him skill to improve its growth and make it yield more largely to meet the needs of a crowded land. God sent the rain and dew and sunshine, to fatten the ears and ripen them. Man ploughs, and digs, and sows, and weeds, and reaps. But this is all waiting on God, who alone gives the increase. Man's work is a prayer, an act of faith which God teaches him, and to which the harvest is God's answer. God might spread our food before us, He might make it to fall round our houses, day by day, as He did for Israel; but this is not His common manner. He gives us what we need in a way which at once brings us near to Him, as dependent children, and stirs up our own strength and will. When year by year harvest time comes round, we have cause to bless God for His gifts. And in our thanksgiving we must not forget the goodness which has bestowed on man the skill and power to be a fellow-labourer with his God in making the fields fruitful and adding to the wealth of the world. Whether God pours out His bounties as when He fed the people in the wilderness, or whether He employs human mind and muscle, the provision is from Him, and we owe Him thanks and praise. It seems as if there were not less but greater might and goodness shown, the more of His work He does through human means. We see God's triumphs most in the exaltation of His noblest earthly creature. When human science and energy seem to master nature, and work what looks like a miracle, we glorify God

who hath given such power to man. We do not sacrifice to our net, or burn incense to our drag. We know Him who guides and blesses our toil, and makes it noble by being Himself our fellow-labourer.

THE MODEL WORKMAN.

OUR Lord lived for thirty years out of sight of the world. He was among the boys of Nazareth, and the working-men of Nazareth, like one of themselves. Only He failed in no duty, and He did no wrong. There was no fault in Him. He did all He did in the best and truest way. During these long years He gave no sign that we are told of, to show that He was more than boy and man. He learned with the boys, He worked with the men. He obeyed. He kept hours. He followed rules. Was all this time lost? Are we, when we think of His work on earth, to count only the three years which He spent as a teacher and worker, claiming to be the Christ, and calling disciples round Him? By no means. When He said to His mother in the Temple, "I must be about My Father's business," He meant the works of His whole life. Each day, from first to last, He did what was set before Him, and went on in the path of duty for our good. He was made, in all things but sin, like to us. He could have had all knowledge put into His man's mind by His Divine power. But He chose to train His mind as we have to train ours, and to gather knowledge with trouble such as we have to take. So He sets the young an example of careful, steady work. He teaches them how their hard lesson learning is part of the "business" their Father gives them to train them for heaven. He puts Himself beside them in their difficulties and temptations, and cheers them by His sympathy. He gave His will and mind to His tasks, and did the least one thoroughly. And He bids those who would be wise like Him, to follow Him in this.

Again, He might have found support without work. He might have made stones bread, and built up lodging by a miracle; but He chose to labour, as men who are but men must. He worked for wages. And He gave the same care to the shaping of the wood, and the fitting of its parts, that He gave to the most solemn work of His ministry. It was all part of His Father's business, and He did it all as well as it could be done. The Son of God was, we are sure, the best carpenter that ever handled tools. No such work was ever turned out as that which came from the hands of that young carpenter in St. Joseph's shop. For no one ever had so high a feeling of honour and of duty, and of the importance of doing all he did as well as He could. No one ever understood as He did how much depends on the spirit and the way in which even small things are done.

Men talk about the dignity of labour. Here we are taught it in a true way. Christ shows us how grand the most common work may be. He teaches us to look on all the tasks of life as part of what is given to bring out our will and force, and train us for the high work in a nobler world where toil is rest and all life is joy. Christ made the work He did glorious and honourable by doing it with the brains and the hands which were God's. We may glorify all we do by doing it in His Name, and in His Strength, not as unto men, but unto Him who gives us our "business" here. If we will let Him, He will fit us for a higher place of trust in heaven.

SIX DAYS.

THE SEVENTH DAY.

MOST men, until lately, used to own that God had a right to one day in the week. The law "Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do," was kept

in the letter, if not in the spirit; and men felt that work on the Lord's day of rest was out of place. There was, indeed, too little thought of God on all the days, and Sunday was kept too much as a day of mere rest for body and mind, too little as a day for the refreshment of the soul. But the six days were not like the seventh: there was a marked change when Sunday morning came; and when men went out to their toil on Monday, they were braced by the quiet of the day of rest.

All this is being changed now. And the change bodes no good. If the cares and work of the world used to put God out of men's thoughts, He is plainly and formally set aside now, and forbidden to intrude into the world's business. Acts of Parliament, for example, warn Him off from many schools where the young pass much of their working time; and His Name is the one name which a teacher may be censured for mentioning. But this is not all. Six days have been taken from God, and He is in danger of losing the seventh. In many places Sunday-schools are becoming schools where everything is taught but religion. In others there is a little Bible reading to persuade the scholars that their work has some religion in it. Reading and writing are very important things, and if a child or a grown-up person has no other time, some time on Sunday may be well spent in using the only opportunity for learning. But it is a wrong to man's mind, as well as his soul, and it is a wrong against God, to let secular teaching needlessly take up any part of the Lord's day. It is a wrong against man's mind; for his mind should be rested by being turned as wholly away as possible from worldly work and cares, and refreshed by nearer contact with the things of God. It is a wrong against man's soul; for man needs to be taught about his eternal life as well as about this passing life; he needs to be trained for heaven as well as for the office and the workshop. It is a wrong against God; for it breaks the rule of life that He has given to man, and robs Him and His Truth of the thought and the honour that He claims.

Of course the ungodly will not feel or care for the loss

to their souls. They only value this world, and will not know the worth of heaven till it is lost. But there is danger lest those who value religion be deceived into forsaking God. A school does not become a school for religious instruction by being kept on Sunday. It may be a school which only has to do with this life, and ought to be open on a week day. To practise reading and writing is not to observe the Lord's day or to worship God. It may show a right care for self-improvement and for worldly getting on; it is no substitute for prayer and the use of means of grace. To "assemble together" with men of all religions or no religion in a reading or writing class is not to be free from the need of assembling with the members of Christ's Body for common worship.

FITS AND STARTS.

THE hare in the fable lost the race. He could run very fast, and, every now and then, he did. But he failed to reach the goal in time, because he often stopped. He lay down to rest, and forgot the aim before him. Meanwhile, the slower animal, which he scorned, went on steadily and won the prize. Just so it is with many Christian men and women. They "run well" at times, and think this is enough. They do not run so as "to obtain." They make a great effort in the Church's solemn seasons—at Advent and Lent. They are very earnest before their Communion, but the rest of their lives they stand still. Rather, they go back. They may better be likened to a man rowing hard up stream, and after a strong pull, falling asleep in the boat, and losing all and more than he had gained.

It is quite right to hail with thankfulness the helps given at the fast and feast times of the Church's year. We are bound to more close care when we are about to draw nigh to the Lord's table, and kneel at God's altar to be fed from God. But we wrong ourselves and God, if we make these

times seasons of religious effort, and the rest of our days seasons of religious sloth. They are meant not to lift us back to a place from which we have gone down, but to raise us higher in a path of steadfast going on. He who is taken by surprise when the calls of Lent and Advent sound in his ears, does not get the full good of the lessons that prepare for Easter and Christmas. He whose life is not what a Communicant's life should be; he who does not in all his weeks try to keep in mind his oneness with Christ, will not be able rightly to profit by a "week's preparation," and will not be fully gladdened when he takes the Body and the Blood.

We are all too ready to take for granted that we must sin and lose ground. So we are less afraid of sin, and less sorry after sin, than we ought to be. We make repentance for wilful wrong-doing or neglect a part of our common religious life which we do not try not to need. We spend special times of religious privilege and opportunity in merely struggling back to some old low ground, from which we quite count upon again falling. Why not aim ever to be rising, and holding ground gained? Why not seek to see farther and more clearly what God calls us to, and while we humble ourselves for being as yet so far short of it, press on hopefully? Alas! for the unsteady, jerky religion with which most of us are content. Alas! that we should thus risk the loss of all, and in the end have to appear before God with such small fruit of grace, and such an unformed, weak nature.

RISING OR FALLING?

ARE you going forward, or falling back—getting better or worse? There is one very good way of finding out; try whether your conscience is more or less tender and watchful. If you find that temptation does not alarm you as it used to do, if sins which once shamed and grieved you

press lightly on your conscience, be warned in time. Your heart is being hardened, evil is less looked on as your great foe. There has been something very wrong, you are in danger of all being wrong. Press back into God's Presence, lest He be hidden from you. Grasp at God's grace, lest it die out of you, and leave your soul dead. Pray for, and yield to the Holy Spirit, lest He be taken from you, and you be left alone to sin freely, carelessly, helplessly.

If you find that you shrink with growing dislike and dread from the coming near of evil; if thoughts of sin startle you, and the rising of sinful feelings shock you with a new pain and disgust, then take courage; God is surely nearer than He was. He makes you more jealous for your own purity and His honour. He gives you a higher aim, and leads you upward. The Spirit claims you more wholly, and speaks out more loudly against whatever might check God's work for your perfection.

GOING BACK.

HOW few press on in the steps of Christ, as years go by! How few grow ripe in soul, as their bodies age! How few add new gains, day by day, to their store of truth and grace! How few even think it needful to go on at all, past the first weak state of their soul's infant life! Alas! things are worse than even this. Are there not few who hold fast what they have won—who do not, from time to time, let all go, so that they have to begin again? In most parishes there are crowds who once were communicants, once were church-goers, once were men and women of prayer, but who have gone back. Why is this? What can be the cause of such wide-spread falling away from grace? Is it God's fault? Have these people taken Him at His word, and found the promise false? Have they tried what God gives, and proved it not worth having?

No one dare think of this being the truth. It cannot be that God mocks men by vain hopes of good. It seems hard to think that those who so lightly turn away from the Lord, can have truly tasted that He is gracious. The blame rests with men; but how?

The fall of some is not hard to explain. They are not whole-hearted in their religion. It is a restraint to them, but not a new life of freedom. They do not get near enough to God to know and love Him. They do not think of Him, or read His Word, or speak to Him, or use the higher means of grace aright. So their religion is not a part of themselves; God has no hold on their hearts. In time they grow weary of what they feel is only a weak attempt, a badly done work. When trial comes, they are prepared to part with what they will not be thoroughly in earnest to make worth keeping.

So, men pray without heart, with no thought beforehand, with no faith in God's pledges, looking for no answer. Prayer, of course, is vain; their words do not reach heaven; they become a mere form—empty, with no aim. They are left out with no loss; and the life becomes prayerless.

So again with the Holy Communion. Men draw near after no preparation, or a hurried one. They do not put before their faith the meaning of what they do, and of what God gives. They have no true awe or hope, when they receive the veiled Presence. They are stirred by little or no feeling of holy, thankful gladness when they go away. They do not realise that a fresh incoming of God to their souls has brought them new power to do well heartily.

The reason that most men go back from grace and the means of grace, is that they do not draw close to God, so as to know Him as a Father, and do not use the Sacraments and means of grace in a way to find out their worth in the experience of their own souls.

GO STRAIGHT ON.

A GOOD story is told in the "Pilgrim's Progress." A man going on his journey saw two lions in the path. At first he felt, as was natural, only fear, and was about to turn back in hopes of escaping. But soon better and braver thoughts came to him. He was on the right road, where duty called him. He was obeying the call of One who was stronger than the lions and who could keep him safe. So he made up his mind to go straight on, whatever happened. Better for him to die, if he was to die, than to live a coward who had left his way of duty. But he had faith that He in whose Hands he was would not let him die. His heart beat quickly as, step by step, he moved forward to where the lions stood, and he could see more plainly their fierce looks. They seemed to fill the whole path, and to wait ready to devour him. He could not help trembling as he heard their angry roar, and saw the glare of their wild eyes. A voice seemed to warn him of his madness in throwing away life, and to urge him to turn aside into a road where he could tread safely. But another voice which gave him strength as he heard it, told him to be brave, and to keep where duty led him, at whatever cost. So he went on as firmly as he could, sure that he was right, and that all would in the end be well, though sadly afraid all the while. Every moment he expected the lions to spring and tear him in pieces. To his amazement they stayed where they were. Perhaps, he thought, they were so sure of him that they did not hurry. As step by step he drew nearer, at last he saw that the lions were chained. There was just room for him to pass between them. Carefully he guided his feet so as not to be more to the right or to the left, and in keeping far from one not to fall into the other's jaws. The lions leaped to the length of their chains, and fought to get loose, and it was dreadful to feel their hot breath against

his cheek and hear their roar in his very ears, but the chains held fast and kept them off. One step more and he had left them behind. The danger was passed. He went on full of gratitude, ready to face any after difficulty with a bold heart.

Here is a lesson for us. Satan tries to stop us in the way in which God calls. We see the path of duty plain and straight. But difficulties and dangers seem to make it impossible to go on. We are tempted to try easier ways, and are told that they will bring us quite as surely to the end. "The slothful man," also, we read, "says there is a lion in the path," and imagines dangers where there are none. Many look for difficulties and want to find them, that they may feel less bound to do what is right. Of course if we act in this easy, untruthful way to ourselves, we shall always find it hard to do as we ought. The devil will help us to plenty of enemies. But if we wish to tread bravely where God bids us, and to go where He invites us, nothing need stop or delay us. No matter what the dangers seem, no matter how strong and savage our foes look. Let us go straight on, never minding who tries to draw us out of the path marked by God and our conscience. When we walk up to the lions we shall find them chained, they will only make us keep more carefully in the middle of the path. And when we have passed them in safety we shall be able to face after dangers with a more calm and brave heart.

KEEP MOVING OR YOU DIE.

THE traveller in cold lands, among the ice and snow, has to guard against a strange danger. A drowsy feeling comes over him. He wants to lie down and sleep. There is no pain, nothing that seems alarming: he is indeed quite peaceful, and the pleasant languor is like a call from nature to rest awhile. Even those who know

best what this sleepiness means, are apt to yield to it, and often lose not only the power, but even the will to strive against it. He who lies down in that sleep which lays hold of him so quietly, never wakens. That drowsiness which lulls all sense of pain is the chilling of his life. If he do not take alarm, he will soon lie in the cold snow, with his blood frozen in his veins, dead. His one hope, when he feels the sleepy calm steal over him, is in strong, active movement, as if to free himself from some fierce tormenting enemy.

A story is told of two friends crossing a high, snow-covered mountain path. One was stricken with his death-sleep, and said he would rest a little. His companion warned him, but he begged only for a short time, then persisted that he must and would rest. His friend, happily for him, was resolute, and began to beat him with his stick, and beat him till he got up and went on, and as soon as he showed a wish to stop, beat him again. So at last they got safe to their journey's end; one was tired with beating, the other was sore from blows, but full of thankfulness to the faithful friend who had saved his life.

Like this drowsiness is the calm which steals over a soul when the love of God grows cold, and the spiritual life is freezing up. Often a man thinks he can take his ease and rest, he stops in his pilgrim way, he thinks he can safely sleep awhile, he yields to the temptation, and knows not that it is death which so quietly folds him round. The danger comes to all at times, and all must guard against it in the same way. Movement, work, pressing on—without these, there is no safety. The more we feel inclined to rest, the more need there is for strong and watchful effort.

We know all this, but knowledge is not enough. We must keep in mind the danger of not acting. Those who understand best what the frost-sleep means may be the first to be overcome by it. The crew of a wrecked ship had to cross a tract of country covered with snow. The doctor warned them before they started that they would want to lie down and sleep, but that if they did they would die, and told them to force everyone to go on. The first man

who wished to stop was the doctor himself. The very man who had told the others of their danger begged and prayed to be allowed to lie down for a short rest. Happily he had spoken so plainly and strongly that the men in spite of his threats and pleadings would not let him kill himself.

Well is it for us, if we are giving way, when a friendly hand rouses us, ere it be too late, even by painful means. Well is it when even an enemy hurts us and will not let us sleep. Well is it when God's kind care startles us by heavy trial or sore agony. It may seem hard at the time, but we shall bless it and Him who sends it, when our pilgrimage is over, and we are at home where we may lie down in peace and take our rest safely.

LITTLE SINS.

IN "Gulliver's travels" we are told that the hero of the story was wrecked on an unknown shore. He fell asleep on a grassy bank; and, wearied with his struggle for life, he slept till the sun rose high. When he awaked he found that he could not stir his head: it was held fast to the earth. Looking round, he saw a great army of very little men, with very small bows and arrows, ready to shoot at him, if he tried to rise. They had found him in their country asleep, and had tied the hairs of his head to the blades of grass. So he was held as securely as if he had been bound with one strong rope.

The writer of this story had in his mind the politics of his day. But the story may be used to teach a religious lesson. Many a man is like the fabled Gulliver. While his soul is sleeping and he is off his guard, one little foe after another creeps up, and lays hold on him, and binds him. He would feel it, if the rough chain of some dark and threatening-looking sin were cast around him. He would fear, and shake himself free. But there seems nothing to disturb his rest, and so he is quiet. When, at

last, he is roused to ask whether something is not wrong, he finds that he is fastened down by a multitude of fine but strong bonds, which cannot be broken without pain; and that he has allowed himself to fall into the power of foes, whose united strength he is unable to resist. One great mastering sin does not hold a man down from God more securely than a number of sins which are called "little," but each of which does its work in weakening and enslaving his soul. A man with any fear or love of God will be startled by the assault of a sin that openly threatens his soul's life. So these sins are indeed less dangerous, for men will awaken, and seek strength to resist. But the sins that hardly seem sins, and come silently upon the soul, allow it to sleep on, dreaming of peace, till its freedom is gone.

Some years ago, people were shocked by a dreadful murder. A man had, for months, given very small daily doses of poison to his wife. The work of death was done so slowly and gradually, that no help was sought till strength and life were broken down past hope of recovery. So it is with the poison of sin: those who hate man's soul mix it with what is pleasant to his taste, and give it in a way to bring him gently but surely to death.

HAPPINESS.

EVERY man looks for and strives for happiness, and almost all fail in finding it. Why is this? Surely man was made to be happy. There must be some way of gaining it. Can it be that there is no satisfaction to be found anywhere? Can man's soul find no rest? Must he be all his life snatching at what seems firm and real, to find that he is only offered shadows? There is no such dark sentence over us. Life may be bright. There is a promise which cannot fail; there is more than we can ask or think, if we will seek it in the right way.

If this be so, why is not happiness won by all? Why does not the look of the world change to something very unlike what it is? Why do men spend their strength, as they do, for nought, and find their freshest hopes wither? It is not hard to see. The reason is plainly this—Men seek for happiness in their own way, and their ignorance of what is truly for their good leads them wrong. We do not, we cannot, know of ourselves wherein our happiness consists, because we do not know ourselves. We have, indeed, certain natural desires, which there is pleasure in yielding to; but no one will say that happiness consists in letting these have free course. They stand in each other's way; and reason must teach us to restrain them, or else they will surely bring us sorrow. But reason cannot do all. There are many things on which happiness largely depends, of which reason can tell us nothing. But reason does tell us this, that in these things we must look to a higher guide. He who has formed our nature, who alone understands it, knows what can give it happiness. He who can look forward through our endless life, sees what will bring us lasting good, what happiness will endure. And we dare not doubt that God is willing to give us all. Have we not proof of His love for us, of his desire to make man's life full of hope and blessing? Is not what He has done a pledge of what He is ready to do still and always? Yes, God desires our well-being. He wishes us to seek happiness, and He tells us the way to find it. The rules of life which He has given—what are they but guides to keep us in the path where His love has willed that we should find peace and satisfaction? God has made us so that the way of religion should be the way of peace. He has arranged that the man who tries to live without God in the world should be without hope. It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves; and this we cannot change.

Thus it is that Godliness is profitable unto all things. How could it be otherwise, while we are under the rule of a Creator who knows our nature and wishes us well! For what is Godliness? Is it not the following in all things the will of God—living according to the rules that He has

made known, to keep us from harm and show us the way to blessing. Godliness must have the promise. By it alone can we hope to gain true happiness in this world, as well as in that which is to come.

CONTENTMENT.

CONTENTMENT is one great virtue to which God calls us. The Bible says very many plain things about the wisdom and the value of this virtue. The Church explains the tenth commandment as teaching us "not to covet nor desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get our own living, and to do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us."

Sometimes men have a low, poor lot in life through their own fault. They have thrown away gifts or friends. They have sunk by sin or idleness. Sometimes men are badly off and in the midst of care, through causes over which they have had no power. God who rules all things knows why they are where they are. Nothing is without His permission. He has let loss follow sin as its right punishment; or He has, with some wise end in view, given a lowly place. If we have made ourselves poor what right have we to complain? We are in our fit place. If God has chosen for us a lot full of care, we may surely trust Him that He has good reasons for so doing. It is only wise to be quiet, and feel that all is right. Now we are where we ought to be, either where our sin has led us, or where God's wise love sees best.

But God and the Church do not mean that we are to make no effort to rise in the world. They teach us to be diligent and earnest to make the most of all the powers we have—to do our duty steadily day by day. And this is surely the right means to use if we would get on and win a higher place among men. Who is most likely to reach the top of a mountain—the man who lies at the

bottom raging at those who are already far above him, or envying the birds who soar up with little toil; or the man who step by step plods on, making sure of his footing as he climbs, glad that he is so far, and resolved to be on higher ground each hour? Who is most likely to master a language—the man who takes up a hard book and vexes himself that he is not gifted with the power to understand it at once, or the man who patiently tries to learn as he can? When we are warned against weak, idle fretting and repining, we are told at the same time the true way to escape from the trouble and care which tempt us to discontent. The farmer has hard, bare fields, before he begins the year's work. He would be foolish if he sat at home and mourned about it. He does his duty in ploughing, and weeding, and lowly-looking tasks. The rich treasures of harvest are his reward.

It is wretched to see idle men, who are unfit for any position but the lowest, railing at those whose lot in the world seems better. It is a right pleasant thing to see men rise by their honest, brave, patient work, and win a place which the training of their life of duty fits them to fill with honour, and to enjoy.

What we win by work is our own—the fruit of God's blessing on His gifts well used. We may gain little, but our work is not lost. We are stronger, truer, better. What we are is more important than what we have.

VERY SORRY.

THE child who has done wrong is very sorry when he is found out. The thief is very sorry when he is caught and must suffer for his crime. Those who harm others are often ready to say that they are very sorry. He whose want of thought and care, or selfish pushing, ruins another's health or blights his hope in life, looks at the wreck and is very sorry. He whose rash tongue blackens

a fair name wonders at the pain and loss he has caused. He thinks he quite sets himself right by saying that he is sure he did not mean to do it, and is very sorry. The selfish home-tyrant, who makes dark the life of those who are nearest to him, is very sorry when their life ends, and they go out of the reach of his cowardly violence. He draws kind feeling to him by wishing he had been kinder. The man who has lived without God, and spent his powers in sin, is very sorry when the end comes, and he looks back and before him. He can find joy in sin no more; he begins to feel the smart of it, and to reap what he has sown. He thinks his sorrow makes all well.

What is all this sorrow worth? Very often there is no true shame felt for the fault or sin. The only sorrow is that the pleasant wrong-doing is not safe. Words of sorrow are often mere words, which come most freely to the lips of those whose hearts feel least. They are often no sign of love for what is good, but of cowardice, which wants to beg off the due punishment of sin that has been enjoyed and is loved still. A man does not wish to be blamed, or in other ways made to suffer: so he pleads that he is very sorry, and often in this way gets for himself some of the sympathy which is the right of those whom he has wronged. He also can often thus blind his own mind and dull his heart, so as quite to lose sight of his fault and have no feeling about it. There is a common belief that whatever a man does, he clears himself before God and man by being sorry, or saying he is so. Many people even go wilfully into sin, with the clear thought in their minds that they will be sorry after they have got the gain or pleasure of the sin, and so make the indulgence safe.

Genuine sorrow is proved true by the care it rouses to shun like cause of sorrow. The way men feel about the past is shown by the way they set themselves to act in the future. The sorrow that asks pardon only, is vain and gets nothing. The sorrow that asks grace to forsake sin and to amend, gains all. Only the repentance by which we forsake sin helps to escape from what past sin deserves.

Even where sorrow is true and heartfelt it does not undo

the past. It builds up nothing it has destroyed. It heals the smart of no wound it has given. It brings back nothing it has thrown away. The sorrow brought on others, the pain given to gentle hearts, cannot be made not to have been by a few words of sorrow after the wrong is done. The course of slander cannot be stopped when the foolish gossip or the small-minded envier finds out to his dismay what a fire he has lit. Lost fortunes or broken down health do not come back when ashamed selfishness or carelessness sheds a few tears over its work. Words and deeds of kindness, a little care and forethought ere it is too late, are worth all talk of sorrow when *it is* too late. So he who has wasted years, and wronged God through life, cannot get back his time to live it rightly. He cannot serve God in those days spent to His dishonour: they are gone for ever. No one dare say how far the mercy of God may not reach; but who can trust sorrow which is put off till there is no way left of proving its truth, when the path of sin and the path of righteousness on earth are alike closed.

The world is the scene of so much selfishness and cruelty and sloth and carelessness, mainly because men think they may do what they like, if they only are "very sorry," and beg pardon; or, in plain words, if they shrink from reaping the fruit of their own chosen ways.

THE WEEPING ANGEL.

THERE is a wonderful picture by the great painter Michael Angelo which represents the Last Judgment. A throne is set, on which the Lord sits in majesty, ready to give each his doom. Thronging multitudes are coming from East and West and North and South, led by a power which they cannot resist, to receive for the things done in the body. There is one striking figure in the centre of the picture. It is that of the angel of the world. He is weep-

ing over the grace and good which the world has refused, and the sorrow which it has drawn down upon itself. We are sure, for the Bible tells us, that God has given His holy angels an interest in the affairs of men. They rejoice when one sinner repents. Must there not be, in some mysterious way, a sorrow corresponding to this joy, when those to whom they have borne God's gifts refuse them, and go wilfully to ruin. It is well to dwell upon such thoughts. It is a comfort to think of the care which our fellow-men have for us. It should be also a help and comfort to think of the love of those higher beings whom we cannot see yet. All should lead us to cling more thankfully to that love which makes men and angels loving; and to fear lest we bring pain and disappointment to our Divine Saviour, who loved us and give Himself for us.

TEMPER.

WHAT sort of temper have I? What sort of temper have the people I live with? These are two questions, the answers to which go far towards settling another question,—Is my life happy or wretched? The questions are not easy ones. People often make sad mistakes. Nothing is more readily overlooked or excused than a fault in one's own temper; nothing is more quickly seen or hardly blamed than bad temper in others. We feel how others try us; we do not feel how we try them. We see how they look; we do not see what we look like to them. Perhaps we judge them sternly for what is but a proof that our own fretful, or rough, or bitter spirit has worn out their patience. We forget how we have provoked them. We only see that the trial has been more than they could bear.

There are as many varieties of bad temper as there are people without self-command. A good temper is one which is held in rein, and guided by the brain and the conscience.

A bad temper is one which, more or less, holds the brain and the conscience in its power, and masters them. Some people get the credit of a good temper when, in truth, they have none at all. They are merely dull and heavy; they do not feel anything much, and no work of mind or will is needed to keep them from showing temper. They let things take their course, and whatever may go wrong they are unmoved. Some get the same credit, only because they have the skill to hide their wrong feelings from the world, and vent it all on one or two poor victims who are in their power. Some again are hardly judged, because an open, warm heart must show all that is in it, while there is a true, earnest effort made to rule and calm the fiery spirit.

Some people have a violent temper. They are ready for a wild, mad outburst of storm at the least crossing of their path. Fierce looks and words, and sometimes blows, may be looked for at a moment's notice, with or without provocation. These people often get much of their own way. Servants do their bidding, but hate and laugh at them. Children run at a look, but there is no love in the obedience. Wives yield quietly, but with a shrinking, ashamed to be under the rule of one who cannot rule himself, and wishing they had never listened to the fair promises of the "gentleman" who wooed and won them. Husbands blush as they hear the loud, harsh voice, and see the mother of their children a scoff to servants or to neighbours. Rage with others often ends in rage with themselves; but violent people, like drunkards, are weaker after each fit, and more helpless.

Some people are less noisy, but as absurd and tormenting. They are never pleased with anything or anybody. Their great aim in life seems to be to find faults, and make themselves and others wretched by complaining. They never storm, but they are nearly always cross, fretful, grumbling. They are like pettish children. Friends weary of them. They are a nuisance in their homes. All keep out of their way who can. Sometimes they are quite blind to their failing, and wonder why people dislike them.

Sometimes they know well the fault which they do not try to overcome, and scorn themselves for it.

Some again are sensitive. They look for a great deal of attention, but show doubt as to their right to it by always suspecting that it is withheld. They are in a constant state of grief and anger. They have no firm faith in their best friends, but always want to be given new assurances that they are not forsaken or forgotten. They show little self-respect, and often they tire friends, who do not think them worth the trouble of nursing.

Some again are sulky. They do not get into a storm of rage that soon blows by; they take a bad feeling into their inmost heart, and keep it there, growing bigger and hotter. Days go by, and weeks, and even years, and the sense of wrong, the anger, the unkind, hard feeling gets more a part of the very nature. Often people will go to church and Communion, and seem to themselves blameless and pious, while, all the time, this one dead fly makes all their religion loathsome.

People who have these or other varieties of bad temper are very much to be pitied; often quite as much as those they torment. Often their fault comes more or less from bodily illness. Always it spoils their own joy in life in many ways. They are not in order or harmony; all is discord within them. They are not their own masters, but at the mercy of the people and the things around them. They do not respect themselves, if they know themselves. They are not respected by others. They make griefs double; they spoil joys. They lose friends, and embitter foes. They give those who are against them new ground for evil speaking and evil doing. They make themselves unfit for prayer; unloving and unloved. They grieve God's Holy Spirit, and give Satan an advantage over them. They make this world unquiet for themselves, and for those whose ill lot it is to live with them; they throw away their hope of the good world, where only the followers of the meek and lowly One shall be.

RULE YOUR TEMPER.

EVERYONE ought to watch his temper with distrust. There is nothing about which we are more easily blinded. We may think ourselves gentle and calm, while everyone else knows that we are hasty or morose. A good temper may get bad by slow degrees, and the owner may know nothing of the change. It is a good plan to watch oneself, as if from outside, and see how we bear provocations, and deal with those who plague and try us. If we listen to our words, and notice our manner, as if we were someone else, we shall be able to judge, pretty well, how things are. Very few have a temper that will bear being left at all free. The firmest and best people feel this to be most true of theirs.

When we know how we fail, then we know how to set to work to mend. Of course, God's help must be sought. That is to be gained by owning our fault, and asking for the grace we need. But it is to be gained also by honest effort and work, in dependence on God's aid. This is one kind of prayer, without which telling our desires to God is very like mockery of Him and of ourselves.

It is great help to think of our Lord's example, and see how His great strength was shown in His calm gentleness. If we are not trying to be "strong in the Lord" in this matter, all our other trying is made vain. It is a good plan, also, to look at our faults as they are seen in others, not that we may judge others, but know better what our faults are like in the eyes of our friends and enemies, and in the sight of God.

Sulky people must try to stop before they get down deeply; and with prayer, and all their will's force, keep out of the darkness. If they feel gloom gathering over all things, from some weakness of body, they should reason with themselves, that things are not as black as they look, and that brooding will only make the cloud darker, and

keep it overhanging longer. It is a good plan to talk about it to some friend, when it is felt coming on, and if it will come on in spite of effort, to keep it from making anyone else miserable.

Hasty people ought to find out what sort of trial they are likely to be roused by, and to be on their guard beforehand. They should practise thinking before they speak or act. If they are taken by surprise, and find themselves in the middle of a wild sentence, they should stop, and force their lips to say some words that will tend to heal and set things right. This is hard to do, but prayer and practice will make it soon easier; and the comfort of it, and the feeling of strength gained, will more than make up for the painful effort. The humiliation, of course, is in the sin, not in the owning of it.

Violent people should act in the same way, and if they have fallen before God, and made themselves absurd in men's eyes, they ought to draw the picture in their minds of what happened, and perhaps write down the story of it, and think what they would say if someone else were in their place. They should lose no time in showing to themselves and their neighbours, and to God, that they do not approve of such outbreaks, and do not wish to be the sort of people they have seemed.

Bad temper is sometimes caused by suffering. This suffering may be a means of grace, bringing to the soul the peace of God. Bad temper may be the sign of a high, strong, but unruled spirit. Let it be ruled, and the energy may be used for great and holy work. Anyone, with God's help, can overcome any fault of temper. Prayer, watching, and working will set all wrong things right.

LOOK FORWARD.

IT is very hard always to live at peace with everybody. When one moves in a crowd, one is sure to jostle

against somebody else, now and then, or to be jostled by a neighbour. Mistakes will be made, misunderstandings will arise. The words and deeds of those who are our best friends will sometimes seem very strange and unkind. Some of those whom we do not know so well are sure often to give us pain and to try our temper. There is a sort of pleasure in trying to give as much as we get of wrong and annoyance. We like to "show our spirit" and put others in the wrong, and make them feel how well we can take our part. But quarrels do not last for ever. When they are over and we cool down, we nearly always look back on them with regret and shame, in proportion to the strong feelings we have had and the strong words we have used. The harm done to us was not so serious after all. The words said about us did not bear the bad meaning we put on them. The acts that injured us were not meant unkindly or in malice. The people that we were so angry with have much good in them and feel quite as much friendship towards us as we have any right to expect. Perhaps we have hurt and pained them far more than they have wronged us. Why need we have done this? We blame ourselves more than them, and wish we could retrace the hasty steps we took and get back to the old state of things. We feel also that we have shown weakness, instead of strength, and lost our dignity, instead of asserting it. We hope that others will forget all this sooner than we can ourselves, and will put a better meaning on it than our conscience does. We feel, in fact, very foolish, when we are with our friends or neighbours as before, and remember how we must have looked to them while we mistook them and were hard upon them. We think of all the pleasure and peace we threw away and the time we wasted. And we do not forget the sins of uncharitableness in thought, word, and deed, of which we must speak to God.

Now, would it not be well to think of all this beforehand, and to look forward and count the cost, when tempted to begin strife. The thought "what will this seem like when I look backward?" will often check the rash temper and

calm the voice and manner. No one with any good in him ever was sorry for having shown self-command when provoked. No one ever let his spirit have its thoughtless way in prompting hard words and rough deeds without having to bear afterwards the reproaching of his better self. If people would look forward more, they would be saved much sorrow in looking back.

RESTITUTION.

A CLERGYMAN was holding a "Mission" in a country town. The people crowded to the services. For three or four days the church was filled, and there seemed every promise of a great work to be done for God. But there was a sudden check, which showed the worth of what had borne the look of a true, deep, religious movement. One night the Missioner preached a very plain, strong sermon on the duty of restitution. He told his hearers that though, of course, God's grace alone could give them pardon for wrong done to God or to their neighbours, they were bound to the uttermost of their power and opportunity to undo any evil of which their conscience warned them. He pointed out that they could not hope for pardon without repentance, and that no repentance was true which did not stir up the penitent to make restitution. The people found this a hard saying. They were quite ready to be roused to strong feeling by stirring sermons against sin in general. They were delighted to be pointed to the Lamb of God, and to hear of the wonders of Divine forgiving love. But it startled them to be told that ill-gotten gains were not to be kept, and that they mocked God if they mourned sin before Him while they quietly enjoyed the pleasant fruit of sin. Like the rich young ruler, they "went away sorrowful." During the remaining days of the Mission, very few came to church. It was a sad proof of the way in which men try to pass off on God a

repentance which costs them nothing, and when this is proved worthless, calmly choose to remain impenitent.

Yet is not the duty of restitution a matter of common sense? No one surely ought to need to have the obligation to it proved. If we are careless about this, how can we have any hope that our repentance is such as God will meet with pardon. No one can pretend to be sorry for wrongs done to God's honour and the name of Christ, who does not ask how he can best prove his zeal and love by earnest self-denying work. He who has slandered his neighbour or done him any harm, must not think it enough to ask God to stay the punishment due to his sins: he must try to make amends for the wrongs which that sin has brought upon his neighbour. He who has money which is the wages of unrighteousness, or which does not in strict right belong to him, must rid his purse of the accursed thing.

To make restitution may and will cost something, perhaps much loss of money and lowering of pride. But what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself. Better to leave all one's possession in the sinking ship than to perish with them. He who refuses restitution is like one who clings to his gold, and is dragged down by it into the drowning waters.

THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOW.

I AM going to tell a true story. Perhaps there are not many towns where some people will not think they know the persons about whom it is written.

John Smith was a steady, sober, hard-working man. He was trusted and valued by his employer; his fellow-workmen at the shop respected him; and his neighbours all gave him a good word. His home was his great pride, and he did all in his power to make it worthy of being called by that name "home," which means so much. In this his wife helped him; and they had the joy of seeing

two children grow up, loving no place more than home. It was long a happy household, but at last sickness came. After a short illness the husband and father was called away.

When the funeral was over, Mrs. Smith began to think how she could best provide for her children's future and her own. She counted up what money she had, and found that altogether about fourteen pounds were left. This would not last long, if she spent it on her daily needs. But she thought it might start her in a small business; so that with her children's earnings, she might be able to pay her way. She was not strong enough for hard work, and attending to a shop would not take her away from home.

So she employed a carpenter to fit up the front room with counters and shelves, and to arrange the window. Then she took some of her bright sovereigns, and went to wholesale warehouses for goods to stock the shop. Very thankful and very hopeful she was when she looked round the room at the well-filled shelves; and her children when they came from work at night, stood outside the window for a long time, admiring the way in which the different things were arranged so as to attract customers.

Customers came, and Mrs. Smith had as much as she could do to serve them all. She was glad to see them, but was a good deal startled to find how few were willing or able to pay ready money. One woman bought groceries to the value of four or five shillings, and then walked out, saying, "My husband will be paid to-morrow, and then I will settle." Another bought four large loaves of bread, saying, "My master is out of work, but I'll pay the first money he gets." So it went on. The shelves emptied, but the cash-box did not fill. Mrs. Smith did not like to lose those who might turn out good customers, so she let the bills increase. Meanwhile she had to bring more of her good gold to stock her shop anew. She had to pay ready money for what she bought, but could not get it, or even slow payment for what she sold. She spoke gently to some of her debtors, but they either gave hard words back, or else went to other shops without paying her claims. At

last all Mrs. Smith's money was gone. She still hoped that things would mend, and did not like to close the shop. She pawned some of her clothes and furniture to get cash to buy goods. In about three months her money, and all the best of her clothes, and her children's clothes were gone. The "fatherless and widow" sold what was left to them, that they could spare; and went into the cheapest house to be found. Then they began a new struggle with the world and its hardships.

Those who had robbed them had no good word for them. God knew all, and the cry of their wrongs entered into His ears. He gave them comfort and blessing in and through their trial: and when those who had devoured their substance "said their prayers" God remembered each of these breaches of the Eighth Commandment, uncared for and unrepented of.

The rich may sometimes devour the fatherless and the widow. The poor, who ought to know the cares of the poor, are guilty in this way very often. It is to be hoped that in most cases they know not what they do. But people who can think ought to think; and it is no excuse for those who have heart and brains that they do not use them.

What shall we say of those who get food from a poor neighbour without paying, that they may have their money free to pay for drink? What will God say to them?

GETTING MARRIED.

"Jesus was called and His disciples to the Marriage."

MEN and women have only one life to live. It is plain that they ought to be very careful about what has to do with making that one life good or bad, happy or wretched. But they too often act most madly, where common sense and thought are most wanted. They do

what cannot be undone, as if it could be set right easily, if found a mistake. They throw away their life, as if they had half a dozen more lives left, after spoiling that.

Nothing spoils the life of man or woman more than a foolish marriage. It would be hard to say how much of the loss of peace and hope in this world dates from wedding days. Everyone who gets married counts on happiness of some sort, on more or less good ground. This is why people get married. So they are right to take care not to do for the sake of happiness what will make happiness impossible. If they have small care about themselves, they ought to think before they bring another into misery.

Happiness before marriage is one thing. Happiness after marriage is another. It is very easy for two people to make one another happy when they are both healthy and hopeful, trying their best to be pleasant, and out of sight of all that makes the world hard and trying. It is not so easy, when two people have to go on through life, dependent on one another for what the world is, bearing all the commonplace worries of their daily path together, accustomed to one another's good qualities, and knowing one another's faults. People who have brains and use them, think, not of what has been or is pleasant in a lover, but of what will be worth having in a husband or a wife. Courting days soon end. Then come the long years, when life is no more a bright dream, but a grave reality. It is the part of people in their wits to look forward through this life. It is the part of people who care for their souls and heaven to look still farther on. To be "yoked with an unbeliever" is to put the worst hindrance in the way of the soul. Very few can hold firm against the downward drag of an ungodly wife or husband. There is, to begin with, the sin of having gone into temptation, and so risked heaven. This weakens the will, damps the courage, and is a cause of losing grace. One result nearly always follows. It is said that marriages are made in heaven; many are plainly the work of the evil one. When some people are married, they are not only wretched here, but robbed of hope for ever. Satan wins them, and parts

them from religion by tempting them to marry not "in the Lord," so that it is hard, and indeed almost impossible, for them to live godly.

There is, of course, no use in trying to make some people act prudently in choosing wife or husband. Their heads are full of silly romance, and they think it would spoil everything to use the common sense and forethought which Providence has given them. They choose to enjoy the dream while they can, and will not come down from the clouds to look at facts, till facts drag them down with an unpleasant shock. Others think that they must get married at all risks, and are ready to snatch at the first opportunity. Of course it is a mere chance how they fare. They cannot be worse off than their folly deserves.

It is very hard to give advice to anyone on such a matter; it is only a little less hard than to get anyone to follow the advice given. But there are some very plain truths and principles that ought to be kept in mind.

A man who bullies his sisters and is rude to his mother will, most likely, beat his wife before they have been married many weeks. A man who only gives up drinking habits while he is trying to win a girl for his wife will be as bad as ever when his only motive is removed, and he has won what he wanted. A man who only goes to church to please his intended wife will, in most cases, give it up as soon as he is married.

A girl who is saucy to her mother, unkind to her brothers and sisters, fond of dress when out, and slovenly at home will bring to the home of a husband all the misery which a malicious man could wish for his worst foe. She will be fretful and cross to him. She will spoil his children by her hasty temper. She will waste his earnings, and drive him from under his own roof by dirt and discomfort.

One last word of warning for both :—

The man who does not treat his intended wife with respect will treat his wife with scorn. The woman who allows her intended husband to offend her self-respect or modesty will force her husband to be ashamed of her.

The blessing of God given in holy matrimony does indeed bestow grace for the new duties and trials of married life; but people do not become new beings when they are married. The good in them often comes out more, the bad shows itself without a veil. But they are the same. Girls are often flattered into the belief that they can reform a bad man. They sometimes prefer a bad man, and like the thought of showing their power in making him good. The experiment always fails. A wife is very soon looked upon like a mother or sister, perhaps treated with less consideration, and listened to with less respect. Men fall sometimes into a mistake of the same sort. They marry foolish girls, and expect to make them wise. They soon tire of the work which mother and schoolmistress have failed in. They grow sick and weary and ashamed of a wife who is not long pretty, but will be always silly.

When people marry, they put their well-being into the power of another. They ought to know what sort of person. It is worth while to be careful; for the step once taken is for life, and they do that which will affect their happiness long after youth has gone, when perhaps there will be many griefs and few joys to share. More than this, eternity may depend on a right or a wrong choice. Marriage may clog and chain the soul to earth, or be a help to godly living, and make plainer the path to heaven. Men and women who believe in God and the life to come should look forward. They must refuse the love of those who do not share hopes of eternity. They must shrink from consenting to a marriage at which they cannot ask Jesus to be present.

MARRIED.

FEW people quite know what they are doing when they marry. Few are long married before they know pretty well what they have done. The time of dreams is soon past.

Married people, whatever their lot is, are bound to make the best of it. Some have to make the best of what is very good; some have to make the best of a very bad business. Some find that they have won more than they hoped for; some find that they have hastily risked their all in this life on one throw, and lost. Some can go on, full of cheer and hope; some have to face a future over which one of the blackest clouds has fallen. But all are bound to make the best of it. If they have done wisely and well, they must take care not to lose or lessen what is good. If they have done foolishly, they must set to work, as best they can, to mend a lot they cannot leave.

Let me speak to the man first. You have taken your wife from home and friends. She is very much at your mercy: you can make her life happy or a despair; you can, more or less, make her good or bad. You have made vows to her in the face of God! I say to you, keep your word, be a man, act like a man, for your own sake. You claim that she shall "love, honour, and obey" you. Show yourself one that cares for her love and deserves it. Be worthy of honour, and so let honour come as a matter of course. Be wise and kind. Be unselfish, and show that you seek her good, that so she may be glad to obey in full trust. Remember that a coarse or unfaithful man will soon harden against him the heart of a pure woman whose heart is worth having. A man who does not respect himself will win a high-minded woman's scorn. A man who is coward enough to bully a woman who is in his power is lowered in her eyes for ever. What can the drunkard look for but loathing, as he reels home in his shame! The man who cannot rule his own temper or his own tongue

has no right to wonder if his wife despises him. No wife can ever respect a man who once has struck her. If you have a good wife, take care lest you make her bad, or make her goodness of no help to you. If you have won her love, you yet may lose it. If it was worth getting, it is worth keeping. If you want her to make your home bright and comfortable, make her life as bright as you can by kindness; make her proud of you, and glad to be called your wife. If you have married badly, try to make what is wrong right. Do not give up all as hopeless. See whether there may not be much fault on both sides. You are the stronger; see that you are what you ought to be. It is worth while to take much pains and care and patience to raise the character of one who is a partner of your life. Be quite sure that your own character is high and is being raised. If you are low you cannot lift her up.

Now let me speak to the wife. Have you a good husband? Thank God for it. There are a great many bad ones; far more than people think, who only see the outside of homes, and only meet men when they are on their good behaviour. Do all you can to make him glad to seek his home. Be as careful to please him as you were before he married you. Women often get into the way of thinking that it is no matter how they look or speak to a husband. But it is a hard test of a man, when he comes home and finds, not the smart, tidy, bright-faced girl of courting days, but a slip-shod, slatternly, half-washed wife, whose looks and manners seem to say that anything is good enough for him. This sort of thing has driven many a true man from his home, and from his own good; it has made many a sober man drunken, and many a hard-working man a worthless idler. Wives often blame their husbands for what they have almost forced them to, and is quite their own fault.

Have you a husband who ill-uses or neglects you? Your case is a hard one: do not make it harder. If he is cross and surly, prove yourself to be quiet and gentle. If he is careless about you, try to show all the care you can for him. He was thoughtful about you and kind once; win

a triumph by making him the same again. Leave not the least ground for laying the fault of his going wrong to you. Wild words and pettish looks will do no good; they will only be an excuse for him, and help to quiet his conscience. If he has any right-mindedness left in him, your patience and gentleness may lead him to say stern things to himself, and will make it easier for him to change his ways. Try to tempt him to his home. Be a strong rival to that which tempts him away. Choose a good time, and plead with him for his own sake and his children's. Above all, pray for him, and get as close as you can to God, that you may be one to whom God's ear is open. Seek blessings for yourself which he may share. Be not weary in well-doing. You cannot tell when he begins to soften. He may seem hardest just at that time. But if he is stubborn in evil, do not let him drag you from good, and spoil the one true comfort left. If he will not go to heaven, do not on that account throw away your own soul. If his example leads your children to ruin, take care that your life and prayers have more power to draw them to blessing. If your husband is a misery to you, make him a cross to keep you close to Christ; do not let him be a weight to sink you away from God.

A word to both. Whether you like it or not, you must depend a great deal for your happiness on one another. What each is will more or less fix what both are, and are to be. Try all you can to help and raise one another's life and character, and in so doing you will raise your own. Make the best of it, whether your lot be "for better or for worse," or what is perhaps most common, for better *and* worse. Make the best of it. Help one another. Bear with one another. Hide one another's faults. Make much of one another's good points. Cares will come, tempers will be tried, life is a hard struggle at the easiest. Do not expect perfection, but try to be as good as you can, and to cheer one another's way. Press on towards heaven. Keep God in sight; draw on Him for the grace you want. This will make a good home on earth brighter: this will bring, even to the dreariest, hope and consolation.

WHO IS IT?

MANY causes spoil religion in the soul, and make workers for God fail. Temptations vary in kind; and it is often hard to know under what special form of trial the steadfastness of anyone has yielded. Why has earnest devotion changed to carelessness? Why has self-denial given place to self-pleasing? Why have duties that were once a delight become a weary round of tasks, done without heart for a while, and little by little given up? Those who watch for souls are often sorely puzzled as they try to trace to its cause the evil that discourages and grieves them. But in some cases they know what has led to the falling away, though why it should have done so they cannot explain. There seems to be no right connection between the cause and the effect. Nay, there ought to be, in all reason, an effect quite opposite.

This is most strikingly true in the case of young people who are looking forward to marriage. When a young man or a young woman begins to be irregular at Sunday-school, to neglect Communion, and to fall off in signs of religious earnestness, one question suggests itself—"*Who is it?*" Nearly always the explanation is that the thought and heart are so taken up by a fellow-creature, that God is forgotten, and love for Him grows cold; so much effort is needed to please a fellow-creature, that no care can be taken to ask whether God is pleased or not. It is miserably the case that those who begin to "keep company" lose taste for the companionship of God. Of all the causes that weaken and spoil and blight and kill religion in the souls and lives of the young, "love-making" is the devil's most busy and successful worker. Who shall ever know how many date the loss of all their hold on God, and all their hope of good here as well as for ever, to the day when they felt that some one loved them best and that some one was loved best by them?

Now, why should this be? That it is the case no one who watches what goes on can doubt. But why should it be? It ought to be all the other way. Marriage is God's ordinance, and that companionship which goes before marriage ought to be, like marriage, under the blessing of God. God ought not to be forgotten when the most solemn event in life, next to birth and death, is looked forward to. His counsel and help ought not to be wilfully put away or carelessly neglected, at a time when the feelings are so apt to blind the judgment, and a step is about to be taken, on which happiness or woe on earth and for ever must largely depend. Before entering on a life of new trials even more certainly than of new joys, grace is surely not less needed, and the means of grace are not less to be valued. When the heart has found a new object whose happiness is felt to be a first interest, that is surely not the time to grow careless in prayer to Him from whom alone true happiness can come. Then is surely the time to pray for all good for the person loved, and to pray for grace to be better able to help that loved one's happiness by goodness of life and character. No one with right feeling would value a love that is easily drawn away from God. If promises of faithfulness to Him are quickly broken, surely vows made to a husband or a wife are not to be trusted. If work for God is forsaken at the bidding of a new interest, how can husband or wife be sure that the same fickleness of heart, the same slothful spirit, may not bring misery to the home which in imagination is so bright a picture? On the other hand the thought will come—"A heart that is true to God will be true to me. I can depend upon one whose sense of duty is so strong that nothing can shake its power in guiding the life."

Some young people seem to think that they do wrong in being fond of one another and in looking forward to being married, or, at all events, something inconsistent with earnest devotion. There need be nothing wrong. There ought not to be. By the way many act they seem to proclaim to the world that in their case, at least, there is. They ought to be jealously careful to give no ground for

such a thought. Sometimes affection is given to one with whom there is no sympathy in religion. Then there is often a deliberate sacrifice of all good in this life and the next. There ought to be care to show the value felt for religion; often there is, instead, an anxiety not to press its claims. So, the ungodly is confirmed in judging that religion is of small worth, and the opportunity of proving its power for good, and bringing its influence to bear, is lost.

With what hope can young people draw near to God's altar and ask a blessing on their wedded life, if the prospect of marriage has drawn them away from God? How can they hope for grace to keep them true to one another and helpers of one another's joy, if their love has made them false to God, cold in their devotions, neglectful of means of grace, careless how they grieve the Holy Spirit?

No wonder that so many look back on their wedding-day as the day from which they date their misery. They put God away while they looked forward to it: can they complain or be surprised if they find that He was not with them, and that now the good they might have had from Him on earth is out of reach for ever. Habits of carelessness about religion are not easily laid aside, specially if they have been allowed to take the place of habits of duty and devotion. When two persons agree together to neglect God for awhile, they are not likely to agree together to return to Him. One is almost sure to go on in ungodliness, and will more or less fatally drag the other in the same downward path. Influence is strongest before marriage. If, of two engaged persons, the one who is religious gives way to the one who is ungodly, there is little or no hope that when they are man and wife, wronged and insulted grace will return so as to enable influence on the side of religion to be felt. In nearly every case those who do not marry "in the Lord," do not spend their married life "in the Lord." What they do not seek God's blessing upon, beforehand, while they are preparing for it, is made a dark disappointment by the want of that light and cheer which God's blessing alone can give.

KEEP GOOD COMPANY.

THERE is an old saying that a man may be known by the company he keeps. Like most old sayings, it has truth and wisdom in it. People choose to be with those who have the same tastes. They talk to those who care for the same subjects. They make friends of those who think as they do, and have the same sort of aims before them. Often we may be in doubt whether a neighbour is a right friend to have. It may be hard to know what kind of man he is, but nearly always we can get help in making up our minds by seeing who his friends are. He may be a man without much in him to show what he is. He may be a cunning hypocrite, or a worthy quiet man; but some of those he keeps company with are sure to have written plainly on them what they are. And from this we can get enough to keep us from falling into great mistakes.

But more than this. Often we are apt to make mistakes about ourselves. We may think we are something quite unlike what we really are. And so we may go on in wrong ways, when we want to be right. We may fail in growing to be a great deal that we ought to be, only because we do not know where we fail, and where we need to set to work to mend.

Now, we are far more quick in seeing the faults of others than our own. Let us get good, if we can, out of this, and try to find out from our company what we are ourselves. It is true of us, as of others, that we are known by the company we keep. If we find that the dull and stupid are our chosen companions, it is more than likely that we are not overwise, and have little wish to learn, or care for talk that is useful. If we spend time with the low-minded and vicious, we must judge ourselves as lookers-on are sure to judge us, and think whether something is not very wrong. If we like the society of evil speakers and heartless gossips, we must take care, lest we be of their bad spirit, and as much to be disliked as they.

The same thing is true in the case of books. Books are company. Our minds will like the thoughts which suit their own taste. They will make friends of authors that give pleasure. What suits our taste tells what we are. A very good way of self-examination is to look over our books, and see which are our favourites, or to write down what we have read during the year, and mark those which we have most and best cared for.

A man is known by the company he keeps. This is true. But we cannot always tell what a man is, for he may be changing as men do, or he may be only just beginning to be of any clearly marked character. But we can tell what he will be in time. No one can escape from growing more or less like those whose thoughts are always passing into his mind, and with whom he walks on the road of life. We catch the way of thinking and speaking and living of those we are much with, even though we do not wish it, or have no thought about it. Some insects and small animals take the colour of the plants on which they feed. Our characters change in the same way. If we want to be high-minded, and thoughtful, and pure, it will be very hard to be so, if we mix much with the mean, and giddy, and corrupt. Hardly anything will help us more than making friends of those who are what we long to be.

Christ is the great pattern of all that man can rise to. Those who have caught His spirit by being near Him are the best company.

HONOUR ALL MEN.

"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked."—1 *Cor.* xiii. 4, 5.

ALL men are God's handiwork. No man in this world has quite lost the marks of God's ownership. We cannot say of any man that he is not the care of God, an object of Divine love, of great worth to the King of kings.

We may not dare to treat with scorn one for whom Christ died, in whom the Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell, whom God the Father longs after as a son. We have no right to harm our neighbour by doing violence to his body or by wronging him in business. So we are bound to take care lest we pain him by want of thoughtful courtesy. His feelings can be hurt, as really and as sorely as the nerves of his body; and our duty is to do to him as we would that he should do unto us, in our manner and words as well as in our acts. We have no more right to withhold courtesy than to refuse payment of a money debt. Refinement is part of the character of a well-bred Christian; it is a sign of that high and gentle spirit which belongs to those who are near the King of heaven. Courtesy is the practice of Divine charity in the small things of daily life. "Charity doth not behave itself unseemly." He who has charity, that is, he whose religion is real, will let his love for God, and for those whom God loves, be shown in his tone of voice, in the look of his face, in his whole way of speaking and acting with others.

This Christian courtesy is quite unlike the common politeness of the world. It is a higher thing, from a higher source, and with a higher motive. Worldly men are polite for selfish reasons, and to those from whom they expect the same in return. Men who have the true spirit of Christian courtesy in them show it naturally in deed and word. They wish to make the world bright; and no smallest thing which may in the least help towards that end is forgotten.

The difference between the two is most plain in this, that Christian courtesy is given as a right to all. The feelings of high and low, rich and poor, are alike owned as having a claim to be respected. There are those indeed to whom from age, wisdom, or place in life, special honour is due; but none are fit subjects for rudeness.

If men are civil to those who treat them civilly, what thank have they? No one needs religion, or much common self-respect, to enable him to do this. If men are courteous to those whom they look up to as in a higher place in life,

what thank have they? True Christian self-respect is shown in care that nothing is said or done, even to the poorest or youngest, in a way inconsistent with Christian refinement. True Christian courtesy is shown in gentle care not to hurt the feelings of any, specially of those who from their worldly position would be most pained by roughness.

POLITENESS.

POLITENESS is not valued in the world or in the Church as it ought to be. The use of it is not seen, nor all the good it does, nor all the harm that comes from the want of it. With many men it is wholly uncared for. Others think it very well and pleasant in its place, but as having nothing to do with real work. There are some who even put on a rough, coarse manner, and fancy that this is a sign of strength and straightforwardness. Some again, who are by nature rough, do not think it worth while to smooth down their hard edges; and push about among their fellow-men, heedless whom they hurt. A good deal of this feeling comes, no doubt, from the fact that politeness is often an outside cloak, put on to flatter and mislead. But we learn the worth of the real article by the extent to which it is imitated. And we do not value gold less because we have been taken in by what looked like it, but was only brass gilt over.

Politeness makes the wheels of business and of daily common life run smoothly. There are two ways of doing and of saying everything. A courteous manner will take away much of the soreness of what is unpleasant. A rude manner spoils even acts of kindness, and makes gifts lose half their value. Difficult matters of business can be got through with far more ease, if each party tries to meet the other courteously. The want of politeness is the cause of most misunderstandings. The same cause hinders them

from being removed, and makes them grow more bad and hopeless. We all know the different feeling we have in buying from a civil shopman, and asking the way from a civil passer-by. We all know how a rude look or coarse word fastens a wrong into us, which of itself would perhaps have been hardly felt or remembered.

Politeness shows self-respect. That which goes out of a man defiles or does credit to him. It tells what he is, whether of a high or a low nature. The courteous man claims, and has a right to claim, courtesy towards himself. A man who is rough offers to everyone the right to pay him back in the same sort of coin. Politeness is the hardest reproof to insolence. It makes it feel helpless and ashamed, and almost forces a return of courtesy. Even where there is not kindness of heart, courtesy is a good thing. It keeps men off from hurting one another. It checks the selfishness which but for it would spoil the peace and comfort of the world. Even the outside thing is good for society, though, of course, men who only have this are in themselves none the better.

But has politeness anything to do with religion? It has; a great deal. Indeed, when this fails, there is some very wrong, weak place in a man's religion. What is a gentleman, or a gentlewoman? The words tell us—one who is "gentle," tender in intercourse with others, and careful not to hurt in any way their feelings. Politeness of a true sort is a carrying out in all the little things of daily life the rule to do to others as we would be done by. It is acting in the spirit of Christian kindness—in the spirit of Christ, in daily home and social life, with our families and friends and acquaintances. It is a part of Charity, and no mean or small part. It is called for all day long, it is continually tried, and may always show pretty well how far our religion is becoming part of ourselves. Anyone can do great things now and then. Very little Christianity may enable a man to bear a heavy trial well, or to make some large effort of self-devotion. But the spirit which is ever courteous and kindly to rich or poor, young or old, servant or master, friend or foe, is no

mere human spirit, no weak Christian spirit. Here is a great and good test whether civility is of the right, true sort. Is it the same to all, as careful of the feelings and the self-respect of the poorest as of the wealthiest, as real when none are by as in the presence of those whose good opinion is valued? Does the man show it because he has it in him? Is he courteous for his own sake, and because God expects it, and it is man's right from him?

Politeness is a part of Charity. Charity "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own." Here is a description of a man who considers others; and acts and speaks so as to give pleasure and avoid giving pain. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Politeness guards a man from little wrongs and slights. It, as it were, takes care of the "pence" among duties. When these are watched well, the "pounds," the great duties, are in little danger. A man who is careful not to hurt his neighbour's feelings will do him no harm in other ways. A man who by word and look honestly tries to make his neighbour's way pleasant will be ready to show kindness in greater things.

SULKS.

CHILDREN have odd ways of showing that they feel wronged. When they are vexed with anyone, they want to do something, and there are not many things which they can do: for those with whom they are angry are generally stronger than they. The only way left to them is to do themselves harm; so their wrath takes the form of sulk, and slowly dies out. While it lasts they give themselves a great deal of loss and pain, and there is the secret satisfaction of thinking that their elders are punished too. A child will often cry himself sick, or do without his food, or turn stubbornly away from pleasures and playmates that he likes very much, simply because he wants to make what

seems the only protest in his power; or he will refuse to say his prayers, for no other reason than that to say them would please the person who has roused his temper. Grown-up people are very sorry to see a child for whom they care act in this foolish way. But a sulky child, that cries and pouts instead of eating his dinner or saying his prayers, is a picture of many a grown-up person who ought to know better, and who is too big for the common family methods of bringing a naughty child to reason.

The parable is very plain. This sort of thing happens every now and then in most parishes. The vicar or his curate, or perhaps the vicar's wife, slights or seems to slight someone. Perhaps there is little pain given, and no harm meant. Perhaps what is done is done with the kindest good-will, and in the best way; perhaps not in the best way imaginable, but in the best way possible. It may be that in the mind of the person who offends there is the deepest care not to give pain; or the offence may only exist in the mind of the too easily hurt, who lays hold of a chance word or look, not meant for him at all, and hits himself with it. He does not hit himself once, but goes on lashing till he is sore. Then he acts as if he knew that the pain was his own giving, for he proceeds to punish himself; and having begun unreasonably, he goes on to show anger against One who has had no part in paining him. What he does looks as if it were planned in this way. "The vicar has not paid me proper respect; so I will not honour God. He has not called on me; so I will keep away from God's house. He has not spoken to me as often or as long as I think right; so I will not speak to God at all, or I will be irregular in my church-going. He has hurt my feelings; so I will hurt my soul. He has not made enough of my work; so I will give it up, and show that I have done it for him and for praise, not for God and souls."

If people who are past the age in which childishness is looked for, who know the worth of their souls and believe in a real God, would put things before them in plain words, they would be less quick to feel hurt. They would find out some better way of setting things right than by

doing themselves wrong; and would not turn their feelings of annoyance against their own souls and God.

FINDING FAULT.

WE all go wrong sometimes, and need to be set right. Very often we would not see our faults, or mend them, if others did not point them out, and warn us. He who shows us what we do not see ourselves, and sets us to work to change a bad course, or give up a bad habit, is a good friend. We ought to be glad to bear to be blamed even in a rough way, rather than to be left alone in blind or stupid sin. And it is the duty of some people to find fault, where fault is, and to give plain honest reproof. Parents, teachers, clergymen, all have this as part of their work. Those who are under their care are sure at times to be in fault, and to need to have their faults put before them and blamed. There are wise and foolish ways of doing this. There are some ways which do more harm than good, and these are perhaps the most often chosen. Some people make mistakes through mere want of thought, some through want of any clear purpose, some through foolishly taking a wrong way to gain a right end. Some blame recklessly, whether they are sure that blame is deserved or not. They get into a habit of fault-finding; and those who suffer from them get to be careless about right or wrong, when they find both treated alike. Some think the end is gained when they have given vent to their displeasure. They scold, merely because they think wrong-doing deserves to be denounced; and when they have said what they feel, they believe that they have done their duty. Others wish to do good to the person in fault, but they do not consider his character or disposition; so they often provoke and harden, where they ought to win and soften. They wonder at a stubbornness which has simply been created by their own blundering. Some people are

less easily touched than others, and need plainer speaking. Some will not believe they are in the wrong, except strong feeling is shown; but hardness very seldom has a good effect on anyone. Very seldom does reproof fail from over-gentleness.

Mere fault-finding, or scolding, it must be remembered, does no good, of itself, to the person who is wrong. It may indeed frighten him into doing or not doing; but it will not work any change in him, except perhaps to stir up his natural rebellion. Fault-finding only does its work well when it leads a wrong doer to blame himself, when it touches his heart and conscience, and rouses all that is good and true in him against his fault. "The goodness of God leads us to repentance," when it reproves us for our ingratitude, and shames us with the love of which our daily blessings and our redemption tell. Let him who has to find fault guard against the danger of stirring up more evil than he blames. Let him show that he does not scold for his "own pleasure," but finds fault in a loving spirit, for the "profit" of him who is in the wrong. Let him appeal to the honour and the heart, and try to speak so that the erring one may be led to say hard things to himself. These reproaches, spoken by his own conscience in shame and sorrow, will do good. The fault-finding of others is only useful so far as it calls forth these. If he be led to feel more than what is said against him, and his reprover seem kinder to him than he is to himself, he will be ready to trust him as a friend. Very often influence is lost for ever through a harsh unsympathising reproof. Pride and resentment are stirred up by severity, which seems to be unfair and is unfeeling. The heart is shut against good from that source, and perhaps is made less ready to open to good at all. If a gentle reproof fail, there is, at all events, seldom a loss of influence which will prevent another trial.

Hard words, like hasty blows, often show bad temper, not care for right; the feeble and lazy use them. Calm words cost more trouble; the strong and loving use them, and rule others, as they rule themselves.

NASTINESS.

EVERYONE was talking of Mr. X., who had died suddenly. The local papers had long lists of his good deeds, and told in glowing words how bright a light was gone. All works of charity had found him an active helper. At all religious meetings he was a chief speaker. His place at public worship was never empty.

Mr. Y., a neighbour, spoke to a friend about the subject that was on all lips. He began with a sort of apology: "I don't like to say anything against one who is gone; but that man was always one of my great difficulties. He did more to prejudice me against religion than anyone I ever met. I have acted with him on committees, and have met him a great deal in private life, and all I can say is, to speak in plain words, he was the nastiest man in his temper and manner and ways that I ever came across. He always had a sneer and a hard word for all who did not see as he saw, and go his way. There was no kindliness about him, or care to let people down softly if he went against them. He was simply nasty; and I used to wonder at him, as I do now, and say to myself, 'If that man's religion is what he and other people think it, it ought to have taken that nastiness out of him.'"

Here was one, in the forefront of the religious world where he lived; who made long prayers, and did many good works; who was no hypocrite, but doubtless felt sure that all was true and real in him; yet who was a hindrance to religion and spoiled its credit. The dead fly made all the ointment of his work and devotion stink.

It was no rare case. There are many "religious" people who forget that religion ought to make them more pleasant to those round them, as well as more pleasing in God's sight. Some even think that they ought to show a severe, hard manner, and that disgust and contempt for those whom they believe wrong in faith or life is rightly felt and

shown. There are times, of course, when those who love God must show jealousy for Him. But this must be done with care for their own charity, and for the souls of others.

If religion does not "take the nastiness" of an unkindly spirit out of us, all else it does for us is vain. If, as is often the case, religion makes us more "nasty" in our spirit than we would be if we had no religion, our religion is so far proved false. We are bound to take heed, when we are known as Christ's disciples, lest men judge of religion by what they see in us, and say that it cannot be worth much, or it would make us less "nasty."

WELL, SIR! WELL, SIR!! WELL, SIR!!!

TWO old officers were neighbours in a small sea-side town. They had known one another since they were boys, and had always been great friends. In the evening of their days they seemed to be drawn closer. They walked together and talked together, and told sad and pleasant tales of old times. It seemed as if one could not do without the other. There came a time, however, when all this stopped. No one knew why, but the two were no longer companions; they walked on opposite sides of the street, and when they met at the club, each read his paper as if the other were not present. After some months had passed, a relative of one of them asked him, "How is it that you and the Colonel are never seen together now? Everyone is wondering about it." The old man looked sheepish, and said nothing; but on being pressed, the whole story came out.

The two friends, coming from opposite directions, met at the post office, where they both had business. "Well, Sir," said the first who spoke. "Well, Sir," was the greeting in reply. "Well, Sir," in a higher key, and louder tone, called forth a still more stern "Well, Sir." Then each turned on his heel, and went his own way, full of wrath

against his former friend. Wise words of the friend who found out the truth soon set all right; but the pleasure of friendship lost during all those months could not be got back again. The old men were thoroughly ashamed of their weakness, but they had many a good laugh together about the time when they "made such fools of themselves."

The quarrel admitted of an easy explanation. The first speaker was in the habit of greeting friends with a familiar "Well, Sir." When he observed that the answer to his greeting on this occasion was "Well, Sir," he thought his friend was mimicking him. Hence the third "Well, Sir," which was the first angry expression used, and thus the real beginning as well as the sole cause of the quarrel that lasted for so long a time.

Most of the quarrels, and heartburnings, and estrangements, that make the world seem lonely and hard, are just as stupid as the one in the story told above. Often there is no cause at all. Often the cause is a trifle, not worth the notice of a man with brains, and with anything to do in the world: nearly always it ought not to be a stumbling-block in the path of the weakest child who makes for heaven. People with sense, when they look back on their quarrels, might well say, not "What a poor Christian I have been proved!" but "How weak and foolish I have been!"

OUR FRIENDS' FAULTS.

WE are not perfect ourselves, and so we have no right to look for perfection in our friends. We often try their patience, and we must make up our minds to bear patiently with them. We often give offence when we do not mean to do so: we are bound to believe that those who offend us are, perhaps, as innocent of unkindness. When we are sad, or fretted, it is not easy to meet those we like best without showing some signs of our state: we must

make allowances for the many things that may make a difference in our friends' manner and tone at times. We are not always the same, and we must not expect them to be so.

People forget this very much. We are apt to judge others in a way in which we would think it very hard to be judged ourselves. We put the worst meaning on their words and looks and acts: we claim that the best meaning should be put on our own. It is really no easy matter to know ourselves, and find out all the reasons and aims of what we do: plainly then we cannot be sure that we see through our neighbours' conduct, and can read their hearts. Except they tell us that they mean to be unkind and act wrongly, we have no right to say we have proof against them. Charity binds us to put the best meaning on what seems most doubtful.

When we see others do what looks very wrong, there are many things for us to think about, before we may dare to blame, or to condemn.

1. Are we sure that there is indeed a fault and that all is not our own fancy?

2. Are we sure that it is as bad as it seems; that there are not many excuses; that perhaps the person blamed is not quite unaware of any wrong?

3. Are we sure that in blaming him we do not condemn ourselves; that we are not, like him, in fault without knowing it?

4. It is no credit to us that men slight or wrong us; for our own sake, as well as for theirs, the less we say about it the better. It is no comfort to us to feel that our friends are false or worthless; the less we think about it the better.

A wise man will be slow to throw away trust in his friends, or to think badly of his fellow-men: if he sees wrong in them, he will use their faults as warnings to himself, and as helps to self-examination, showing where he is likely to have at least the roots of like sin. He will be moved to humility and caution, not to pride and scorn of others.

GOOD-NATURED PEOPLE.

TO be good-natured in the true full meaning of the words is to be all that man need be. But who is good in his nature, so as to be born without fault and with no will to go astray? Who is so changed by grace as to dare to think that his nature has become good? Who is there who even *aims* only at what is good? There is no one on earth whose nature is not fallen, and who is quite raised to what he ought to be. "There is none good but One, that is God."

But the words have been given a meaning of their own. Everyone knows what is meant when a man is said to be good-natured. It is not high praise; it is not given to the highest stamp of man. Rather it is a sort of apology for the want of any marked character for good or for evil. A man is commonly called good-natured when nothing else can be said to his credit. The words make us think of a smiling, easy-going person, with no great care for right or wrong, not earnest about doing much good or much harm, the same to everyone, pleasant when it costs no trouble, too lazy to be unkind, wise enough to keep out of trouble himself, but not wise enough to be any help to others. When a man is spoken of as a useless member of society, a burden on his friends, idle, dull, slothful, some charitable voice is sure to speak for him and plead that he is "good-natured." The plea seems to amount to this—that he is not all bad or worthless or offensive.

The good-natured man is not of much use to himself; he is often a great cause of harm to his neighbours. He is the more dangerous because his character makes people off their guard with him, and gets him easy pardon for the mischief he does. As a rule he is not a hard worker, and so as a rule he is a great talker. He is trusted because he looks amiable; then he pleases gossips by betraying secrets to them and talking scandal; and his evil tales are believed

because he is thought too good-natured to invent or be malicious. So he goes on in his weak blundering course, making mischief, blackening fair names, separating friends, wounding hearts. All the while he is quite content with himself, pleading that he means no harm, and by the amiable feeling he shows about the ruin he causes gaining new credit for his "good-nature."

In every neighbourhood there are wicked and malicious people who know what they are about and who wilfully pain and wrong their neighbours. But they are known and can be guarded against: their words are not of much weight; they speak and act openly, so they can be met openly. The ill-natured do small harm compared with those who wound and injure with pleasant smile and easy heart, and are so "good-natured" that no one can be angry with them. Suffering and loss are real, and are felt to be real, whether due to the ill-will of the strong, or the amiable blundering of those who neither know nor feel the harm they do.

No man may think well of himself, if he has the name of being good-natured, and only this. He ought to fear lest he be wanting in all that makes up true worth. Everyone ought to aim at that high state of growth in active love to God and man, which will make his nature indeed good, and his work such as will in the end be found well done.

RUNAWAY TONGUES.

THE tongue is a little member, but it is the hardest of all to manage. Indeed, St. James says plainly, that he who can bridle it, is able to guide all the rest of him, and is "perfect." This is the same as saying that no one is quite master of his tongue; for no one is perfect. So we need not wonder at tongues generally running wild as they do; for few people have any or much thought of the

power for good or evil which they are responsible for, and the difficulty of keeping it in order.

With the tongue all that is in man's mind and heart can work, and make its influence for good or evil felt. With the tongue we can spread truth, cheer the sad, guide the bewildered, warn those who go wrong, and do all good for God's cause and man's. With the tongue, also, we can spread falsehood, blight character, break hearts, mislead the guileless, stir up strife, rob our neighbours, and blaspheme God. With the tongue we can show ourselves pure and high-minded, or mean and coarse and bad. Any of these things are possible for any of us; and some one or other of these things we do every time we open our lips. Ought we not to fasten a firm, strong rein on this mighty means of harm or blessing, and watch and pray that it may be forced to keep in a right and useful path?

Many people guide their tongues carefully to hide what they are and to deceive others. They use them in the work of busy malice or greed. They set them "on fire of hell," that they may serve their worldly ends, or gain for them what the flesh hungers after. These are not really the most dangerous to their neighbours. They can be guarded against, more or less; and, in the end, they are themselves the worst sufferers.

Those who do most harm are, perhaps, the people "who mean no harm." They let their tongues go wild, or where their own silly thoughts and feelings send them. Such tongues are like a ship on fire, drifting in a crowded anchorage; or they are like a runaway horse, over which his stupid rider has lost control. They do not fail to bring damage in their course. A tongue that goes on unruled is sure to touch the good name and feelings and interests of others, doing mischief, unintentionally, indeed, but quite really. Carelessness burns a house down as thoroughly as incendiarism. A coachman who drives over you does not kill or maim you any the less, because he is only weak and stupid, and is very sorry afterwards.

We are warned of the power which the tongue has for good and evil, and the need of care in ruling it. The words

are plain which tell us that if we do not bridle the tongue, our "religion is vain," spite of all "seeming" in other ways. We may plead that we only forget; but we have no right to forget, where so much is at stake, for our neighbours and ourselves, and for God's cause. If we would watch what comes from our lips, or wants to come from them, we should soon find out what is in us, what sort of people we are; and know how to set to work to have the heart changed, out of the abundance of which our mouth speaketh.

"God listens to the words you say,
Let love and wisdom guide them all;
Unbridled tongues that run away
Will surely be their owners' fall."

BRIGHTNESS.

THE world is not so dark a place as some men love to call it. Life need not be to many as dark as it is. There are ways of cheering even a very sad lot. Those who try can bring much light to the dreariest path their neighbours have to tread. All men have their own griefs. All men have sufferers round them. It is the duty of all to bear their own sorrows well, and to help others to do the same. One way is open to all. All can be bright, and show themselves so. Thus, in a true sense, they can let their light shine before men to God's glory.

Cheerfulness, and the power of looking at the bright side, are spoken of as if they were rare gifts of a few. They are the plain simple duty of everyone. They are, in some cases, hard duties; but they are beyond the reach of no one, or else, of course, they would not be duties. Some of those on whose hearts lie the heaviest loads seem often most light-hearted. Some, who seem to have the best claim for comfort, are like sunshine to the less tried but less brave around them. Man is stronger than his worst griefs. And if

he will, he can show himself so. What is right for him to be and do, he may count on being helped to be and do. And this brightness, whatever comes, is one of the most blessed and readiest ways of doing good. He who endures brings cheer and strength to others: he who tries to cheer others, braces his own spirit.

It is not night because a few clouds hide the sky. All is not lost because one or many good things have made us rich for a time and have gone. Let us learn more to feel the value of what is left, and rejoice in it. And surely there is joy in looking back on bright days: surely the hope of days to come, full of eternal promise, ought to lift us out of sadness. Whatever be lost, whatever care come, God still is left; He can and will give what help is needed. He calls to duty, He promises strength and consolation, He guides towards heaven. There is no time to brood over sorrows; they are meant to do us good, not to crush us; to make us braver, not to daunt us; to fit us more for our work, not to wrap us up in self.

We have cares and griefs. Why let them spoil the joys we have, and the work we are set? Why be guilty of the conceit and vulgarity of saying by our looks to all we meet that we are very sorely tried? Why accuse God by the sad tones of our voice? Many of those round us have enough to bear of their own. Many have a claim on us for cheer, while we bring them only new gloom. Many do not care about us. Many laugh at weakness and refuse it sympathy, while they would gladly give to a brave endurer the help of willing heart and hand.

It may be said that we are told to weep with them that weep. True, but nowhere are we told to bring new gloom to a house of mourning. Tears are no sign of how much is felt, nor is a dreary voice or gloomy face. Brightness is not carelessness. When of the true sort, it proves the deepest tenderness, and gives the strength it shows.

Again, it may be said, How can a heart which knows its sin fail to make the brightest full of grief? Not "full of grief," else there were no room for joy. No man can know his sin aright except he knows his Saviour too. Joy is

greater than grief, and joy in a Saviour is a greater thing than sorrow for sin. Joy in Him, and in the pardon and holiness He gives, is stronger than all grief. He bids us show what He is to us, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God for which He forms us.

Brightness is a duty: in some cases harder than in others, but still a duty; and the more effort it costs the more good we get and do. Hardly ever is this duty thought of as a duty. Thus many well-meaning men, who long to do right, rob God of honour, spoil and stunt their own souls' growth, and withhold from those round them what it would bless them to give. They do not wish to upbraid God as hard on them; they would not rob their fellow-men of money or good name: and yet from lack of brightness, from gloom of voice and manner, they are always doing harm. Some true earnest people are the worst sinners in this way. They talk of joy; but look as if they do not know what joy is. They talk of hope; but look as if all hope of earth were gone, and no hope of hereafter had taken its place. They talk of peace; but their looks and tone are those of utter care. So they warn off the young and glad, whom God means to be glad, from what would make them more glad. They are among the worst scandals to religion.

We must be bright, and so try to do our part in making this world of God's, in which men live, bright. If brightness does not come naturally, we must seek to gain it, we must pray for it. It is among God's best gifts. It is one of the surest proofs that we know God as a God of love, who loves to see His children glad. It is one of the most precious helps in our own way towards the world of joy. It is a most strong power with which to make this world more what God longs to see it.

TIDINESS.

AN officer who commands one of our best regiments, has been laughed at for his strict notions about order. He is said to have condemned more than one young man, as sure to make a bad officer, because his boots were not ranged in a straight line in his barrack room. This seems absurd, but there is much to be said for the colonel. He knows the importance of small things, or rather that nothing is trifling; and he knows that what are called trifles help to form character and show what a man will be likely to prove when there is much at stake. Life and life's work are made up of small parts. The power to make a great effort comes commonly from habits gained by many lesser ones. The doing of one act of heroism is often but the end of a long course of careful doing well in things that draw no man's eye.

The old rule says, "A place for everything, and everything in its place." To this may be added, "A time for everything, and everything in its time." Neglect of these two rules makes much of the working power of the world useless, spoils the comfort and hope of countless lives, multiplies temptations, and hinders the religion of perhaps most so-called religious people. What a vast number of people need to have said to them is this, "Be tidy, do what you do in order; look on your whole life as serious; do not get out of the habit of order in half your life, while you try to gain and show the habit in the other half."

To come to particulars. Be tidy in dress. Some scorn care in this, as if they were above such thoughts. Some have even measured goodness by slovenliness. Tidiness does not mean expense. The cheapest dress may be clean and in order. Clothes put on well, and well cared for, last longer, and so cost less. If a man have no respect for his body, which is the "temple of the Holy Ghost," he has no right to show disrespect for those with whom he must live;

nor ought he to show such confidence in his worth as to take for granted that others will overlook his slovenliness for the sake of it. Everything in its place. The place for dirt is not on a man's clothes or person. Who can imagine the Pattern Man being slovenly?

Be tidy in your house. Who can tell how much time is lost, how much temper is spoiled, how many bad words pass, because nothing can be found when it is wanted? There is, also, a sure, constant influence in the look of a well-ordered house, and in the look of a disorderly one. Thus tidiness is not only an effect but a cause of what is good.

Be tidy in your use of time. Have a time for work, and a time for rest, and keep to them. Do not mix them up together, so as to enjoy neither, and do neither well. Many wonder that time goes by so vainly. They have never set themselves to work by rule, nor have they any free time in which they can feel they have earned the right to rest.

Religion is a matter of all life, and the "little things" of every day are part of religion. Even our harmless pleasures have their place in making and keeping us what God would have us be. But want of order—untidiness, is made great use of by Satan to hinder man's growth in holiness, and spoil the devotion and work they offer to God. The same habits, the same character show themselves. Why do so many groan for fear that they get no higher, no farther on? In most cases they have no rule or method, no care for place or time, no order or tidiness in their religion. They have no fixed time for prayer or self-searching, or reading of the Scriptures. They make a great effort, and then fall back into almost neglect. They have no system of watching for besetting sins, and following on them till they have destroyed them. They seek for growth in Christian graces, in a haphazard, scrambling way. They do their work for God and the Church without any rule as to time or manner.

Happiness and success in this life come very much from habits of order, rule, tidiness, showing and influencing what a man is and does. Those same habits may not be treated

lightly by those whose aims and hopes are beyond earth. They are among the duties of religion, and among its greatest helps.

CLEANLINESS AND GODLINESS.

IT is taken for granted in the Bible that dirt is a very bad thing, and cleanliness a very good thing. Sin is called uncleanness; holiness is called purity. The washing of the body is used as a figure of the making holy of the spirit. When we are urged to put away sin, the words used are, "Wash you, make you clean." It seems quite plain that there is some spiritual value and meaning in cleanliness, and that God does care whether we are careful about it. Of course it is easy to say that the soul's purity is the great matter. This is true; but while we must first seek to be free from spot within, we are nowhere told to neglect the outside.

And there is more connection between the two than men think. We know how body and soul are bound with one another, and how the state of the soul depends much on the state of the body. When a man is out of health, his faith, his hope, his temper, his power of work for God and his neighbour, all feel it. The way is opened for many temptations, and he is less strong and fit to meet them. Now there is nothing more sure than this, that health depends vastly on cleanliness. Our skin is pierced with pores which over the whole body make up a great many miles of piping. We breathe through these. If they were all stopped up, we should die just as surely as if our mouth and nostrils were closed. To keep these open, we must use water. If we don't do this, our bodily health suffers, and this affects our mind and soul. In one way the health of our body is a religious care, as truly as the health of our soul. Our bodies belong to God, and we are bound to keep them in good repair for His use and work. Except for the

sake of our soul, or for others' good, we have no right to throw away health.

Again, we are always dying. What a careless man bears on his skin and clothes is really part of a corpse, just the same thing that we put into a coffin and bury deep in the ground. Surely God does not mean us to carry about with us part of a dead body.

It is very hard to think well of a man who is not careful to be clean. He surely can have small respect for God, or himself, or his neighbour.

We are careful to keep a church clean, because it is God's house, and there we look for His special presence, when we seek Him. Are we not God's house? Are not our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost? Are not our members the members of Christ? Surely, then, it is a part of religion, and of the right honour we owe to Him who dwells in us, to care for the outward purity of the body as well as the inward whiteness of the soul.

And what self-respect can he have who is content to live in a state which must degrade him, who does not think it worth while to take the trouble with himself which is needed? Most of the lower animals are very careful to cleanse away any speck or stain. More is expected from a man. And have we no duty to our neighbour in this matter? We may not care ourselves, whether we are clean or dirty; but many of those who have to do with us do. They have no right to claim that we should wear expensive clothes, but they have a right to claim that we should not wear dirt, either on our skin or our dress. It is a duty not to offend or disgust them by a want of careful cleanliness.

A great deal more might be said about the use of soap and water, as bearing on and having to do with the duty we owe to our God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Enough has been hinted at to show that it is quite wrong to say that cleanliness is "next to godliness." It is far more than this. It is a part of godliness.

WITH ALL MY STRENGTH.

TO read is not the same as to study. To be at work is not the same as to work. Many men read a great deal, and yet learn very little. Many men spend long hours, tied to tasks, and yet do almost nothing. The reason is that they do not give their mind to what they are about, and work with a will. To gain any end in this world, men must not only work, but work in the right way, and with a right earnestness.

So in the things of the soul and God. It is not from the time spent in religious duties that success comes. Men may go on saying prayers till they lose all thought of any good to come from them. Men may read the Bible through and through, and yet grow no more wise unto salvation. Men may go through a long course of meditation, and find no truth of God more real to mind or heart. And there is much of this aimless waste. Men who could not be at ease while neglecting religion altogether, often quiet themselves by going through a course of duty. They use means of grace with regularity, but without setting before them any grace to be sought for by these means. Their desires are not roused, their strength is not put forth to reach any aim. So, no wonder that so much of what is called prayer, and looks like religious work, leads to nothing but mere coldness, and unbelief, and sloth. God withholds what men do not long for and mean to use. He hides Himself and His truth from those who do not care to know Him.

Into each prayer should be thrown the whole strength of mind, and heart, and will. The answer should be counted on from Him who is more ready to give than we are to ask. Each effort to learn more of God should be an earnest, reverent looking for the light that comes to those who draw near the awful Presence. All is real that passes between the soul and God. God does not trifle with us, or call us to Him without purpose. We cannot

go away as we come. We have trifled with God and our eternal interests; or else we have received gifts which will bind us to do more work, and enable us to have more joy.

I MUST MAKE UP MY MIND.

THESE are words men very often say when they are urged to any duty. Talk to them about giving up some bad way of life; tell them of God's claims and rights; show them why they ought to pray and come to church; tell them of higher things to be aimed at, and closer union with God to be sought; they will seldom deny that all is true and right. They will see and own the justice of all reasons given; they will often show that they know it all quite well; they will even themselves bring forward what adds to the force of the arguments pressed on them But in the end they will go no farther than to say, "I must make up my mind."

Now, what does this mean? Surely the mind is made up already. They know all that could be told them about the duty; they see why they are bound to it; they own the folly and sin of neglect, and the value of obedience. The truth is, they simply want to put off the trouble of acting on their minds' convictions to a more convenient season. They quiet their own uncomfortable feeling; they think to get rid of those who warn them; they fancy in some way that they are safe before God; they mean to change; and when it is quite easy and costs nothing, they will be all they ought to be.

But this kind of hope and promise seldom comes to anything; for the habit of putting off and waiting grows, and men spend all their lives meaning, as they say, "to make up their minds," and going on still in the same old way. In truth their minds are made up *not* to make an effort; they are, if they only knew it, calmly saying to God: "I

won't put myself out, or be in any hurry. Time enough; I will change when I like."

Sinner, going on towards death, and towards heaven or hell, will you thus trifle with your Lord and God. If you were sleeping in a ship on the sea, and one called to you and told you the ship was on fire, and that the boats were going off which offered the one hope of safety; if you looked out and saw the flames spreading, would you lie in your berth and say, "Yes, it's all true. I must make up my mind." Would not this be the speech of a madman? No, you would have your mind made up at once; your will would rouse every power you have; you would start up and do all for your safety and to help others. And is your soul less precious than your life? Are you content that the flames of that wrath which burns against sin should gather round you, and that the deep should threaten to swallow you, while you talk about "making up your mind" to use means to escape.

Face the facts, know the truth, look well at what is plain; for the question before you is no light one. It is of life or death. "Make up your mind" whether God deserves your heart and has a right to your obedience; whether what He offers is worth having; whether what He warns you of is to be feared. Then act, and act at once. Show that you have a mind, and know what you are doing. Make up your *will*. Make up your *body*. Go down on your knees, and speak with your lips words of penitence and prayer. Read with your eyes the words of Holy Scripture. Walk to church; don't walk in ways of evil. Sitting at home "making up your mind" will not do your daily work and earn wages for your family. So, you will not gain the meat that endureth except you labour for it. God has given you body, soul, and spirit. Use them all, and all together. Make up your mind for God or Satan, for eternity or for time. Let your mind and heart "make up" your body and guide your life.

LAZINESS.

A GREAT deal of the work of the world is left undone; a great deal is half done; a great deal is badly done. The reason is that people are lazy. Numbers, when they reach middle age, feel that their lives have been, and must, more or less, go on being failures. Many find themselves dull, poor, badly-educated, low down among their fellows, without ways of making life cheery and useful. Laziness is the cause. Many, at the end of life, look back on past years with shame, and on into the solemn future with faint hope or with none. Their minds are unstored with truth, their consciences are untrained. Their wills are weak, or hardened in the wrong way. Their habits have been formed, as one influence or another happened to be strongest. Again, laziness is the cause. Laziness is the foe of man's good and joy here and for ever. Satan knows this well. If he can make a man lazy, he deadens so much power that ought to be at work for right and holy ends: he lays the man open to a whole army of temptations.

Each man has work to do in the world, in himself, for himself, and for others. Each has his own character to form: he has to learn truth, to learn to think rightly about truth, to store and train his mind. He has, besides, to form good habits by doing right things because they are right: he has to try to become, in all parts of him, as full-formed and ripe as, with his gifts and means, he can. Further, each man has to make a path for himself in life, and gain and bring round him what he needs. The rule, "If any man will not work neither let him eat," is a good rule: and he has no right to use what God gives, who does not use it as a worker, and in the use of it fit himself for more work. There are tasks set before each man, which no one but he can do, which no other man can leave his own work to do, instead of him. The whole work of the

world is so far hindered by the failure of each one who hangs back or is wanting.

There are those around everyone who have a claim for kind words and deeds, for help and cheer. God gives them a claim, and no man has a right to live as if his own interests were all he had to act for. Nor may anyone think that the part of his work which is for others needs less care, and zeal, and steady force than that which is for himself. We are closely bound together. What we do for self is meant to lead to and help what we do for others. The force we throw into our efforts for others brings good to ourselves.

There are many sorts of laziness, and those who are most lazy often think that they are very hard-worked and industrious. Some men are slow to set to work, and they do not go on. They lose half their time in making up their minds to begin: or the least trifle draws them away, and stops them altogether. They shrink from work, they put it off as long as they can, and leave it as soon as they can. Of a great part of their lives they can give no account whatever. Some men again are always doing something, but they never work in downright earnest. Only half the force in them is used: they are never braced and firm, doing their best with a will. So their work is neither enough nor good enough. They have no joy in it. It does them no good. Nay, it weakens them, and settles them in habits of lounging.

Of course all our lawful every-day work is part of our religion, part of our duty and of our training for heaven. All may be made, in a true way, worship and praise. But we are called on to do a great deal in the way of drawing near to God, and gaining grace from Him, and caring for our souls. This is work, as well as what we have to do for time. It needs and it is worth the utmost effort of all the will and force in us. The work is great and hard and of many kinds. It is of the last importance whether it is done, and how it is done. No one will question this; and yet if men are lazy over their worldly tasks, far more slow, and weak-willed, and languid are they when they are asked

to leave earth out of sight, and give themselves to the solemn vast interests of their eternity. Love of sin blots many a name out of the Book of Life. The laziness of those who in their hearts hate sin blots out more. Many fail of heaven because they have no wish for holiness. Many more fail because they are lazy in acting on the good desires God gives, and in seeking what they long for. It is strange and frightful how souls lose and are lost through this one sin. Instead of hard work up the stream, much so-called Christian life is mere drifting as the current goes. Much real toil is made vain, for want of a little more force, a little prompter or longer work.

How many are always "meaning" to make some effort at amendment; but days and years go by, and leave them still too lazy to begin! How many grow old in blind darkness about God's truth, because they are too lazy to read and hear and study as if the subject was worth knowing anything about! How many mourn over sins that hold them down in shame, when half the time spent in God-fearing, God-trusting fight would set them free! How many are poor, weak beings, who wonder why they never get any higher in the Christian life, while the truth ought to be plain! They are too lazy. They look to be lifted and carried on, while God calls them to rise and walk in the power already given. Means of grace are within their reach, but they will not seek the food of their souls: it must be dropped into their mouths. Such are those who would rather have ten minutes more of needless lying in bed than time to pray without hurry; who do not try to come to early Celebrations, or get up soon enough to prepare themselves; who let any small addition to the trouble of going to church stop them. How many are there who say many prayers, but are too lazy to pray as they ought! They ask why their prayers seem unheard; all the while they have never put will and force into the prayers they said. But why go on? Anyone who thinks must see that God is robbed of glory, and the Church's light is dim, not so much from the sin of daring sinners as from the laziness of the well-meaning.

HELP ONE ANOTHER.

THE work of sin is done well. No one need feel lonely who chooses wrong paths. At every step he finds those who will cheer and help him on, and make it hard for him to go back to the pure ways that he has left. Each slave of sin is a soldier too, fighting in the bad cause, enlisting soldiers for the war against God and holiness. He watches to encourage anyone who begins doubtingly to follow a downward course. He will let none desert the ranks whom he can keep.

Why is it not so with those who are on God's side, sworn to resist sin, and to work in the good cause of truth? Why are they not always on the alert to win whom they can to side with their Lord, giving them a hearty welcome, and cheering them by friendly word and deed? Every worshipper ought to bring others to share what he finds good for himself. Every Communicant ought to doubt his own faithfulness, if he is not trying to lead his friends to seek grace in the highest of all ways. Every Sunday-school teacher ought to watch for those who might help in the good work. Every Sunday scholar ought to do his best to bring his companions to school.

Alas! it is easier to scatter than to gather in. There are more who work openly against Christ than who are with Him. The enemies of religion often seem to have more thought for others than those have who profess to love God. Were there the same boldness and activity shown in helping souls that are shown in hindering them, God's love would win more triumphs and meet with fewer disappointments.

WHAT THEY CAN GET.

SOME people show interest in religion only in one way—by hindering it. They don't care about it for themselves, and they are very unwilling to see others gain the grace of it. They claim the right to sin as they please against God, to waste their means in drink, or folly, and to neglect their families. They are angry if any fault is found with them. But they do not give a neighbour the same freedom to serve God that they claim to serve sin, the same freedom to go to church that they claim to go to the public-house, the same freedom to keep homes and children respectable that they claim to be dirty and disreputable. If one man or woman in a court or terrace begins to try to live as if there were a God and a hereafter, the devil's friends set hard to work to spoil what God is doing; scoffs and sneers and acts of unkindness make the cross sharp and the load heavy. The changed manner and way of life are called hypocrisy. The improvement in tidiness and comfort, which are signs of the bettered character and habits, are set down as proof of bribes received as rewards of hypocrisy. The common sneer is, "Oh, they only go to church for what they can get!"

There are many things to be said about these words. In the first place, people do, in one way, go to church for "what they can get." Of course the great aim is to worship and praise God; but public worship is a means of grace. Earnest people go, expecting to "get" from God help and blessing in their life and work for Him. Ungodly people have no notion of this. They do all they do from worldly motives; if they went to church it would be with a low aim. They cannot imagine their neighbours having honest, high aims; so they judge them as they know they might justly be judged themselves.

Again, those who attend to their religious duties are just the persons who, as a rule, do not need and do not ask

alms. For they attend to their earthly duties also; they can be trusted to be at their work regularly, and to do it honestly; so they are valued by employers. They do not waste their gains in drink or sin, but lay them out to the best advantage. They feel it a duty to provide against sickness and bad times; so they are independent of charity when they want a doctor, or have to work short hours. Then they grow in self-respect, and take care to be clean and as well dressed as their means allow. They feel the need of Sunday clothes, that they may show in every way a right reverence for Him whose house they enter. All this is a continual rebuke to the idle, drinking, dirty neighbours, who are always leaving their places of work, or spending their wages uselessly, who never look forward, and whose good clothes are hardly ever out of the pawnshops. They hate to see what God's blessing brings to those who do their duty to God and men and themselves. They know in their hearts that what they call bad luck is their own fault: but they turn the accusings of their conscience into slander of those whom they envy.

Again, these are the very people who "go to church or to the parson for what they can get." When sickness or want comes, they are always the first to seek help. They are always the most greedy and most shameless beggars. They are glad to take from the hard earnings of the steady neighbours whom they tried to persecute into being as thriftless and godless as themselves. They send eagerly for the clergyman, whose work they have hindered to the utmost of their power, and whose acts they have misrepresented. Often they profess care about religion which is all false, and which is proved so when the need of worldly help is passed. They have no shame in taking all they "can get" in the way of food and money, though they know quite well that only through their own fault are they dependent upon charity. Very often they are helped out of the offerings given at church by the very neighbours whom they have scoffed at for going there. Many of them think they deceive the parson, when, all the while, he knows well their whole story. He measures the worth of

their words of promise. He understands that they speak fairly with a view to what they can get. He cannot let them starve, or refuse any help in his power, though he knows that they have no claim on him more than on anyone else, that words are wasted on them, and that he can do little more for their souls than pray God to change them.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

"Study to be quiet, and to do your own business."—
1 *Thess.* iv. 11.

A VERY good rule, or rather, two good rules! We all have our own business: most of us need to be told to mind it—to give our minds to it, and do it as it ought to be done. People all around us have their business, with which we have no right to meddle: most of us need to be warned back to our own business. We are too ready to let our minds, and wills, and powers of one kind or another be abroad doing mischief, rather than at home doing useful work. After all, the rule may be said to be but one; for we have plenty of our own business to keep us at work; and if we mind that, even in any decent way, there will be no time or strength left for interfering with our neighbours.

One word, to guard against mistake. It is not meant that any man may live a selfish life, with no care for those who, with him, struggle on through the difficulties of a hard world. It is part of our business to do all the good we can for others. When we help those in need, cheer the sad, and do what we are able to make the lives of all good and hopeful for time and eternity, we mind a very real and important part of our business. This is part of our duty and our training, meant to make us fit for yet higher trust hereafter. This is not forbidden, but commanded by the rule.

Perhaps, like many people, you spend a great deal of time and labour in finding out and talking over your neighbour's faults, and even harmless oddities. Sometimes you think

you act from real interest in your neighbours, and wish for their good. Most often there is not even this pretence to give a fair name to what is mere impertinent meddling. How very much better to mind your own business! You have plenty of failings of your own, that unkind people laugh at or blame you for, and which you might correct, so as to become pleasanter and happier. Mind your own business. Search out your own faults, and talk about them to your conscience and God, and perhaps to some wise guide, that you may mend them.

Perhaps you are fond of what is called controversy. You like to undermine the faith of others, and make them feel unsettled. Meanwhile, your own faith is perhaps weak, and sorely needs to be built up. Your first "business" is to see well to the foundation and state of your own faith. Men are indeed bound, if they can, to help others to gain full knowledge of the truth; but the best way to do this is to show that their faith is of God by the purity and gentleness it gives to their character and lives. "Mind your own business" is a good caution for those who would win converts. It does not tell in favour of any doctrines, that they make those who hold them scornful and offensive in words or manner.

When you go to church, what do you go for? Make up your mind about this, and mind your own business. You have quite enough to take up all your thoughts, and the whole force of your spiritual being. If you have sense enough to know anything of the meaning of going to church, you will own this. You come face to face with God, whom, by the very act of thus seeking His Presence, you ask to look at and to listen to you. You profess to have something to say to God, and to do before Him, and that you seek from Him some gift for your soul. If you do not feel this, or something like it, or feel that you ought to feel this, and in an honest way try to do so, you had far better go back from the church door. But, if you go in, mind your own business. Turn your eyes in upon your soul and up to God. Keep your thoughts fixed. The business is real, and unless you give your whole "mind" to it, you

cannot do it to any good purpose. It is not your business to watch the people coming in, and to note what they wear. It is no business of yours to watch how they act in worship. They are before God; not before you. If they use more signs of outward reverence than you, that is not your business. Your business is to blame yourself, if you are so careless of what you are about as to see and remark them, and to take care that all you do and say and sing comes from the heart, and has a meaning in God's ears. If they seem less outwardly reverent than you think right, you cannot see their heart; and if you could, it would be no business of yours to judge them. Be reverent yourself. What others do, or fail to do, need not distract you. Mind your own business, and you will have enough to make you too occupied to be hindered. So, when you are in a strange church, and the clergyman does not stand, or look, or speak as you like, you are not come to watch him. Mind your own business.

So on in countless ways. What a world might this be if each one felt that he had some business to mind, and minded it! There would be fewer complaints of failure in life, of worry and care. There would be far more work done, far more peace, and comfort, and religion. The secret of happiness and usefulness is indeed summed up in the simple advice—"Know what is your own business, and mind it."

DON'T BE A COWARD.

YOUNG people seldom begin to do wrong because they like it, or find real pleasure in the sin or folly. Conscience makes them uneasy and afraid; they are ashamed when they think of father and mother, even if they do not remember God; and they do not like themselves so well. But they are led on by others, and give way to temptation under the notion that there is something fine or manly in

breaking loose from control and doing what is wrong. Lads will curse and swear simply that they may appear more reckless than they are. They will drink, in spite of headache and nausea, that others may consider them fine fellows who can do as men do. They will talk about holy things in a way that makes themselves tremble, for the sake of showing off to a few worthless companions. And as with other sinners, their one pitiful aim is to seem dashing and knowing among those whom they in their secret hearts despise, and whom they would not be like for worlds.

What miserable folly is theirs! How all good men pity them! How they must scorn themselves if they only think of what they do! Anyone who is not dumb can use bad language; there is no skill required for that; the only pluck needed is the kind of courage that is not afraid of Satan, and does not care to lose self-respect, the love of God, and of the good. Any fool can drink, if he is only willing to give up his place among decent men, losing his chance of getting on in life, and his hope hereafter. A gallon can would hold more than a man could take, so that there is nothing to boast of in hard drinking. As a matter of fact, those with whom foolish boys try to stand well are the very persons who laugh at and despise them most. Men who are evil themselves feel utter disgust when they see their own vices copied and admired. It is the kind of feeling we all have when we look at monkeys imitating and caricaturing what we do.

And is it not the very opposite of independence to give up our own sense of what is right, and follow the lead of others—to do, not what we choose and want to do, but what we see a bad companion do? Is it not the most utter cowardice to sneak away from God and true pure ways, lest some low neighbour should laugh at or torment us? Surely he is brave who takes his own way, and does what is right, and lets no one interfere with him in following conscience, and duty, and God. There is nothing fine or manly in letting the flesh have its way, instead of holding it in, and guiding it with a firm, strong hand, to work for us, not to master us. It is manly to act as a man who

has a soul and a mind, not only a body to feed and lusts to let loose, like a brute of the field. No one thinks a man a fine, clever fellow, whose horse runs away with him, or throws him in the mud whenever he pleases. We admire the man who, with a firm hand and steady seat, makes his horse go where he wills, when he wills, and at what pace he wills, and simply obey.

SURETISHIP.

A MAN who was praised for his success in business was asked how it was that he always did so well, and made so few mistakes. He said at once, "I think I owe all my position to the care with which I have, all my life, studied the Book of Proverbs, and tried to act on the wise principles laid down there." The answer startled those who heard it. But they need not have been surprised. God is the source of all wisdom. He is the best guide for this life, as well as for the other—in matters of buying and selling and trade, as well as in matters of devotion. The reason men fail in this world is, for the most part, because they think that God need not be consulted and has no help to give in business, or that they know better than He can tell them how to manage their affairs.

There is one point on which the Book of Proverbs is very clear and strong. Over and over again we are warned of the dangers of "suretiship." One passage is enough to quote here, *Prov.* xxii. 26, 27—"Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?" The world seems to have been, in Solomon's time, much what it is now. There was the same readiness to impose upon friendship, and the same foolish readiness to be imposed upon.

A woman who had a sick child dying, in a bare house, with no comforts, and hardly any food, opened a cupboard

and showed a pile of pawn-tickets. "There," she said, "are what we have lived on for the last three months. My husband was bound for a neighbour, and the bailiffs came in one day when we were both out, and took away all we had but our few clothes. And we have had to sell these for bread; for my husband took it so to heart that he drank himself out of his place of work and nearly into his grave. The man he was bound for could have made things right, but he left my husband to it."

This is a common case. There are people who thrive on this sort of robbery. They want a few pounds, and persuade a friend who has a good house of furniture to sign a joint note with them. Then they know that they are safe; for the creditor is sure to come upon the man whose goods are most sure to cover the debt. Everyone who asks a friend to sign for him in this way, says it is only a form. Perhaps at the time he thinks it is, but when the time comes for payment it is often proved that the assurance is only a form, but that the debt is a reality which the good-natured trusting friend has to pay.

Now it is very hard to say "No" firmly, when a shop-mate or a neighbour tells a man that by letting him have the use of his name for two or three months he can have the use of a sum of money which will set him up in a small way of business, or help him out of a difficulty. There may be cases where it is not wrong to say "Yes." But in most cases it is not only weak and foolish, it is downright sin. In the first place it sometimes tempts to robbery of the basest kind, meanness, falsehood, breach of trust. Besides, if a man is taken in thus, he is apt to lose trust in everyone, and to grow hard and selfish. He may be tempted to revenge; and, blaming himself, may become morose in his home and bitter against God.

When a man gives his name as surety he ought to be quite clear that he can afford to lose the sum, at all events without hurting anyone but himself. He should look on it as no more his own, till the paper on which he has pledged it is in his hands again. No married man has a right to bring a risk on his wife and children. His duty

to them comes first: they are his nearest neighbours, and they have a claim to be thought of in all he does. Far better to say to the needy friend, "I will give you half what you ask," whatever it may cost; for then you know the end of your loss. Better to give half the furniture or the money in the savings' bank freely, than to have all taken against your will.

The whole meaning of giving security should be faced before the name is signed. A good way to word the promise would in many cases be something like this: "I undertake, if the borrower does not pay, to give to the lender all my household goods, and what my wife had when we were married, with all our savings; and to begin life again with no comforts in my home, and without the power of giving my children the advantages which by right ought to be theirs."

Prudence in worldly matters is part of religion; and if a man is bound to work for his family, he is just as much bound, in God's sight, to take all care that they shall not be robbed. He sins if through want of thought or of courage he puts them into the power of a stranger.

BORROWING AND LENDING.

IF we ask God to keep us from temptation, we must take care not to go in the way of it wilfully. If we ask God to save us in temptation, we must take care that we do not mean to ask Him to save us from the due fruit of our own carelessness and folly. Most people when they pray for help in trial, ought to begin by confessing that the trial is of their own seeking, and ought to beg humbly for pardon. We have no right to add needlessly to the cares and worries of life, which become temptation, and make it harder for us to do our duty, and to keep our faith in God and man. We sin grievously if by rash thoughtlessness we bring others into loss or trouble. Moreover the old

saying has much truth in it, that "fools make knaves," and silly people who cannot say "No" and are easily taken in tempt their neighbours to dishonesty.

Borrowing and lending are the root of much evil. They cause quarrelling, bitterness, and loss, far beyond what is commonly thought of. There are, indeed, cases where neighbours do well to help one another by showing such kindnesses; but as a rule borrowing and lending are bad for friendship, as well as for the pocket and for the soul. Many people borrow from mere laziness, or with a dishonest purpose. Many people lend from laziness, or with a dishonest purpose.

The Bible says that "the borrower is servant (or slave) to the lender" (*Prov.* xxii. 7), and a man who has another in his power will not always use his power generously. Often a little effort or self-denial would make it unnecessary to sacrifice independence, and would enable people to eat their own bread, and spend their own money. Often a little honesty would stop people from asking as a loan what they never mean to repay. Often a little effort of moral courage would enable a man to refuse to encourage dishonesty by "lending" what he knows he shall not get back, and he cannot afford to lose. Often a lender deliberately throws out a bait to catch the unwary, whom he may rob, and torture, and turn out bare upon the world.

One sort of borrowing is full of evil. Some people go regularly to a pawnshop on Monday, and when wages come in on Saturday get their goods out again. The accommodation is small, and the cost seems small, each time. But if these people would count up what the interest on the money which they have the use of for a couple of days in each week comes to in the year, they would be startled. Those who are made idiotic by drink would probably go on, but any sane person would take some strong step to get free at once.

Shakespeare says that "Loan oft loseth both itself and friend." How true this is! People plead most humbly for a small help for a short time. They are lent what the lender can ill spare, and can spare at all only till perhaps

rent day. But as soon as they have got the relief their tone changes, they think it a great wrong to be asked to repay, and they reward good nature not only by theft but by hatred.

One class of robbers of the poor ought to be called by their right name. There are dishonest money lenders, who advertise in newspapers, and send round circulars offering loans on terms which look like pure benevolence. The conditions are so easy that they seem hardly business like. But the cat does not show its claws at first; only gentle softness is felt till it is safe to grasp the victim. When the name is signed, "only as a matter of form" perhaps, ruin hangs over the signer. He goes away with his five or ten pounds, and thinks he has got over his difficulty easily. He has paid, indeed, more half-crowns and half-sovereigns than the advertisement led him to expect; but after all, it seems fair, and he will make it all straight. The payments come more quickly than he expected, and grow heavier. If he misses one through illness or short work, down comes the plunderer upon him. He is shown words in the agreement which he has never, perhaps, read, or which he was told were only a form, but to which his name is clearly signed. It may be that all his past payments are lost, or some heavy fine falls on him. He cannot meet the demand; he comes home one evening and finds the bailiff in possession, or finds his house stripped and his wife and children crying in the shelter of bare walls. If this does not happen, he pays at the rate of 100 or 200 per cent. He knows that he has been robbed by a heartless robber of the poor; he feels that he has been deceived and made the sport of avaricious cunning. He knows that, had he made an effort of self-denial or patience, or had he counted the cost, or taken care to see his way at first, this ruin would not have come upon him. He could bear it for himself; but what can he do to restore his home to those who are dependent on him? The grief and loss are bad enough, but what a crowd of temptations to sin come with these! His lot on earth is perhaps hopelessly saddened, and his way to heaven made harder.

THRIFT.

THE thrifty thrive. Those who make the most of what they have, even though it be little, have far more comfort and enjoyment than others who use carelessly their larger means. Plenty often tempts to waste; and waste, sooner or later, brings want. It is a common remark that busy people can best find time for any special work, and that the idle, who have not much to do, scarcely ever have their tasks done, and cannot be free either to enjoy themselves or to help others. As with time, so it is with money. Men with large incomes that do not seem to need watching are often without a penny in their pocket, and are sorely pressed to meet just claims. They are often the least willing to give to the suffering and the needy. On the other hand, men with small means, who take care how it all goes, spend what they do spend to good purpose, and always know how they stand and what they can really afford. They are not afraid of giving to God's work, or God's poor, what really is not theirs, but is the right of the butcher or the baker. They know that their name on a subscription list will not provoke a sneer from a tailor or a furniture dealer, whose bill is unpaid.

The poor are much lectured about thrift, and many of them need to learn how to make their small means go far. Many of them have so little, that they feel as if it were not worth while to take any care of it. Life, too, has so little hope for them, that they get out of the way of looking forward; they think only of the days as they pass, sometimes with a half-despairing feeling that things cannot be worse. So there is often waste in a home where the weekly income is counted in shillings, that would not be thought of in homes where it is as many pounds. There is loss from carelessness and from ignorance. The wrong things are bought: they are wrongly prepared and used; they are not taken proper care of. In good times, all that comes in

is spent, much of it in thoughtless ways; and when hard times come no provision has been made.

This is all true; but it is easy to lecture the poor. We must remember that they are not alone in their faults. In most of them they copy those who are better off, and who ought to know better and set a good example. The value of thrift and the evils of waste are more plain in the homes of the poor; but they are as real among their employers. All need to be reminded that money, be it much or little, is a trust, for the due and right use of which we shall be asked to give an account. Like our time and our powers of various kinds, the shillings and pounds that come into our hands are part of what we are given to use for our own good and the good of others, and for God's glory. The way we use them tests our character, and the habits we gain in their use help to make us what we are to be when we are judged. We are not free to do what we will with what we call our own. God keeps His hold on it all. He gives us strength and skill to earn it; or He gave power to others to earn what has come to us with no cost or toil of our own. We are stewards, and are bound to be faithful. Waste is sin. We must keep ourselves and those dependent on us fed and clad and housed so as to be fit for life's duties. We are right to keep the position among men which we have won, or which has been won for us by those of whom we were born. We are right, also, to have such pleasures as we can afford, which help to keep mind and body in healthy working order. We can best do all this, by guarding against careless and useless spending, by having a plan, and taking care that the plan is, as far as may be, carried out. Examination of our account book will perhaps show that by a little management far more comfort and enjoyment might have been gained at less cost; and a better plan may be made for the future.

There is hardly anyone who is so poor that he cannot give something to God. As a rule the poor give far more, according to their means, than the well-to-do and the rich. Thrift is needful in almsgiving as well as in one's personal

expenses. If a man can give five pounds or five pence in charity, he is bound to see that it is well spent. The smaller the sum, the more care he should take that it goes to a good object. Mere giving to anyone, deserving or not, may be nothing but sinful waste. The aim of alms-giving is not only to help the needy, but to do good to him that helps him by calling out his love for God and man, and training him for sympathy and self-denial. It may only make the giver proud, and quiet his conscience, and make the separation wider between class and class. What men have to give is, besides, the right of deserving objects. It can only be given once, and must not be thrown away, to save the trouble of finding out where it ought to go.

True thrift is part of true religion. It has much to do with our duty to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to God. If we are unthrifty, we lose without fail much of our power of doing good, we open the way to much temptation, we show that we lack a right sense of the claim God makes upon all the parts of our daily life. And careless habits about this world's goods follow us into our whole life for God and for eternity. Who will commit to our trust the true riches, if we are unfaithful in that with which God trusts us now?

MANLINESS.

MEN like to be thought manly. To be called unmanly is felt as one of the worst insults. Lads of the right sort take care that there is no blot on their manliness. Lads of the wrong sort, who have not the high mind and the strong stuff in them to be manly, use all kinds of low, poor ways to seem what they are not. It is a good thing to aim at being manly. Those who do this will turn out true men. Those who only try to look manly will never grow to be worth much, and will never win respect.

Great harm is done when a name which belongs to what

is noble is given to or used by what is base. Then the base thing passes in a stolen dress. And the noble thing loses credit from being mixed up in people's minds with the worthless imitation. Manliness has lost a great deal of the honour it has a right to, because so much that is bad and mean calls itself manly. And the young are sadly misled by being tempted to show manliness in ways that are most unmanly.

What is manliness? What is it to be manly? The words teach us by what they mean. Manliness is *man-likeness.* To be manly is to be and to act like a man. To be godly is to be and to act like God, to copy Him as far as man is able. To be manly is to show and put forth those powers in which a man is above other beings. Man has gifts which are his only. To be manly is to let none of these be idle or hidden, but train and use them to the full. A man may be unmanly in having some good quality only as strong or noble in him as the lower animals. He may be unmanly in failing to have a higher aim than they. He may be unmanly in having some of the perfections which belong to woman's nature, instead of those which go to make up the full nature of a man. Many things are not wrong in a good dog, which are shameful in a man. Many things are lovely in a woman, which would be laughed at and scorned in her son or husband. Just in the same way, many things, which man does and is with honour, bring a woman no good name.

It is easier to say what is unmanly than what is manly, taking the word in this clear meaning. For much that is manly does not belong to man alone. He is unmanly if he wants some things; but he is not proved manly because he has them.

A coward is unmanly. It is not like a man to yield to fear of pain, or to run away from duty to save himself. This is not even like a good dog. A moral coward is not manly. It is not like a man to choose dishonour and do wrong, for some low mean end. Among the most unmanly of all men are those who try by bold sin to gain the name of manliness, which they have not courage or nobleness to

gain by doing right. Many copy the vices of bad men, whose vices make them unmanly and like brutes, or devils. Boys often begin low habits in this way. They see men drink, and hear them use foul language. They fancy, when they do the same, that they are like men. The poor boys do not know that these are the unmanly points in those whom they make their models.

Lying is unmanly, for man knows the value of honour, and the duty and dignity of being true. Cruelty is unmanly, because man can understand what pain is, and mercy is part of the nature of a man who is not a moral cripple. Intemperance is unmanly, because man has knowledge to guide him in the use of the earth's gifts, and he knows that his powers of body and mind are a trust, for the right state and use of which he must answer. Idleness is unmanly, because man can see the claims of work. He can tell of good which industry brings to himself, even apart from its wages and rewards. And he knows that there is an end in his life here, for which work trains him. To live only for this world is unmanly, for that is to lose sight of what God has shown to His noblest creature; that is to forget what is the one great thing in which a man is better than a brute. To be without God, to live away from Him, is to be without the hope which we alone of earth-born creatures have. It is utter unmanliness.

To be manly is "to be a man"—to have and show what God has given to man, and made him able to be. The most manly man is he who is nearest to what was in God's mind when He planned man in His own likeness. Thus the most godly man is the most manly. The most like God of all who ever lived as man was Christ. True manliness was shown in Him. Men are manly as they show His nature and walk in His steps.

EMIGRATION.

WHEN a man is about to emigrate, he tries to know what he is doing, and to do it as well as he can. He finds out the best place to go to, and the best way to get there. His thoughts are far more in the home he looks forward to than in that which he is soon to leave. He learns all that he is able about the sort of life he will have to live in the new land, and the sort of people he will be among. All that tells about these matters interests him. If he meets a man who has lived or travelled in the country, he listens with eagerness to what he says about it. He reads carefully any books which can give him useful information. He tries in his daily work to fit himself for life in the far-away land. He gets together all the means he can, so as to be able to start with a good outfit, and be ready to take his place when he lands. If he wants to go to Australia, he does not spend his money in buying a passage to America. He does not waste his money in things which he must leave behind, and which he can get nothing for. He takes care to get into the right ship, bound for the port he wants to go to, and a seaworthy one, which will bear him safely.

A man who does not act in this way is laughed at or pitied as stupid. It is strange that men do not judge in the same way about that emigration which is before us all. We are soon to leave the land where we now are, and pass to a new home and a new life. All here must be left behind. We must launch forth from the shores of this world, and be borne to a country from which we can never return. There is a choice of countries. All wish to reach that which is called heaven. Yet how few seem to care to be sure that they are going there! For the most part, the guide-book which is in all men's hands is little studied. He who came down from heaven, to tell us about the far-off home, finds few to listen to His words, or follow His

advice, or make use of His information. Men spend their all on what will help them in nothing when their short time here is over. Much is spent on what really fits them for the land of the lost. And those who are in earnest, and who mean and wish to gain the good land of peace and plenty, are yet cold in their interest about it. There is small eagerness to learn of its people and its ways. There is weak effort to lay up the right store, and be ready to go away and begin the new life, when the time comes. Often the ship to which men trust themselves is chosen because it is comfortable or looks well in port. There is hardly a question asked as to whither it is bound, or if it can bear the perils of the voyage.

When we once leave the shores of this world it is too late to come back and start afresh. Is it not worth while to think much of the country where we hope to be for ever? Can we learn too diligently of its King, its laws, and its people? Can we be too careful in choosing the surest and best way by which to travel towards it?

PEACE.

CHRIST came to bring peace on earth. Through Him man gains peace with God, peace in his own nature, and a peace-making spirit towards his fellow-men. Christ's work fails in him who has not these three. The last is the great test whether a man has a right to the other two; and this is too often kept out of mind. Men who are warm in their words of devotion, and feel no doubt as to their state of grace and hope of heaven, are often hardest in their thoughts and words about their fellow-men. Surely there is something very wrong where this is the case. He who blesses God and curses man out of the same mouth must have good cause to doubt how far the blessing comes from a heart in which Christ rules. True love to God cannot be where there is none of the charity which thinketh

no evil of man. He who does not hope all things, and is not ready to labour for peace, can hardly be one whose heart and mind are kept by the peace of God. If a man's religion does not make him gentle and tender in dealing with others, careful to give fair play to all and to be straightforward and generous, it is not the sort of religion Christ teaches. Those who wish to be Christ's in any true way must have and show His spirit, not only at prayer-time and with friends, but out in the world, and among those who differ from them.

One thing needs to be remembered in these times of busy thought and talk about religious and political questions. Those who hold views and take sides which are not ours have the same right to courtesy and Christian treatment that we claim for ourselves. Who are we, that we should brand as either fools or rogues all who do not see what we see in the same way? If they are coarse and violent, there is no good reason why we should show our own cause weak, and join them in sin. It is high time that some strong warning should be given about the hard words and the gross charges that men make against one another at public meetings and in the newspapers. If all that is said on all sides is believed, one can only think that there is no such thing as an honest man who is not a fool. And it is sad to see how the most bitter and groundless abuse is most welcomed and applauded. Great questions are not argued out fairly; but each side tries its best to make the other look as bad or as absurd as possible. So truth suffers, and peace and love are lost. Men are parted more and more from one another, and they are so accustomed to see all rules of charity set aside in public speeches and writings, that they forget to be guided by them at all, and are content to be "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."

CONTROVERSY.

VERY little good is done by controversy. Nearly always it leads to a great deal of harm. The reason is that it is carried on by the wrong people, in a wrong way, and with wrong ends.

Who are the men that are most fond of wrangling about sacred things, and who condemn their neighbours most bitterly? They are very seldom people who know much about one doctrine, or another. They hardly ever do religion much credit by their lives. And how do they try to bring over others to their faith? Is it not very often by calling them hard names, or laughing at them? Perhaps they tell them that they must be either very foolish, or very wicked. And when they seem earnest and full of zeal in their disputes, what makes them so? Hardly ever a true love for the truth of God; most often, it is to be feared, a wish to get the better of those whom they try to prove in the wrong.

Very few people have the learning or religion to give them a right to argue about the deep truths of God. The most learned and holy are always the most humble and most patient. It is only the very ignorant, who have little fear of God, that let themselves speak rashly and noisily about these things: they are not afraid, because they do not see how awful and great the mysteries of religion are. It is well for us to keep ourselves as clear of controversy as we can, and try to show what our religion is, not by the way in which we can talk about it, but by the way it changes our lives; not by the way it teaches us to abuse our neighbours' faith, but by the love it gives us for themselves. We ought to be able to give an answer to everyone that asks us a reason of the faith that is in us; but this is another thing from rushing at everyone who differs from us, and trying to prove him wrong.

Before we join in any controversy we ought to think of a good many things.

1. Are we living a life which will bring any credit to the cause we wish to uphold? Perhaps we would only disgrace it, and had better be silent.

2. Do we know what our own faith is? Many a time a man uses very strong language against others, when almost every word he says tells just as much against himself. He is so ignorant that he knows nothing of this; but sensible lookers on laugh at him, and perhaps a good cause suffers.

3. Do we know what we are condemning? There is often a great deal of strength wasted by people fighting a man of straw made by themselves. Sometimes, through laziness, which won't take the trouble to find out the truth, sometimes through malice, they accuse others of holding doctrines which they never held, and then go on to prove the doctrines false, and all who profess them knaves or fools. Thus, a well-known preacher used very violent language, some time ago, about the service for Holy Baptism. He spoke as if the Church taught that every child that was baptized must go to heaven, whatever kind of life he lived. Now, of course, if he had cared to enquire, he would have found that neither the Church of England nor any other Church ever held such a doctrine. Plenty of people act like this preacher every day.

4. What end are we seeking—the glory of God, or a victory for ourselves? Is it not to be feared that those who so lose their charity, and are so bitter and violent, are thinking more of themselves than of God? Surely there would be a more modest, loving spirit shown, if they felt that it was for God's cause they were labouring, and that they were speaking of matters that had to do with man's salvation.

If we are not pretty clear about these points, we cannot be too careful. At all events, most of us who talk a great deal about religious questions might spend our time and strength much better. Very few can argue well, but we can all live well. Very few can understand arguments; all can see the meaning and feel the force of holiness. And

we may be quite sure that we are much more likely to make converts to what we believe to be the truth of Christ's Church by a holy, loving life, than by the weightiest reasons, especially if love be wanting, and our faith seems to have no power over what we do. Besides, we all need to learn a great deal. We are much better employed in building up our own religion, and making it as perfect, with God's help, as we can, than in pulling down the religion of others. We must keep in mind that when we have proved our neighbours wrong, we have not proved that we are right. This is another question altogether, and it would be well to begin with this. Let us try to make our own footing firm and our hold tight, seeking for the *truth* honestly, simply, humbly, as before God, and prizing it, when we feel we have it, more than all other things; and let us show what our religion can make of us—what parents, and husbands, and wives, and brothers, and sisters, and neighbours. We may not bring over many to our way of thinking, but we will make them respect the way of living to which our faith leads. Our light will shine before men, and they will see our good works, and glorify our Father in heaven.

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.

MAN is of more worth than the lower animals. He alone was made in God's image. He has the right to use other creatures, and, if need be, to sacrifice them for his good. But, though it is true that God cares in a special way for man, it is not true that He forgets the least to which He has given life. Nor may man use other creatures as if they were all his, and not at all God's. God has not given them away: He allows men the use of what still belongs to Him. Those who study the strange beauty of God's handiwork, and the care He has shown in providing for the support and comfort of the commonest

animals, must feel more or less warned to treat them as God's. The Almighty does "take care for oxen." One reason given for keeping the Sabbath was that "ox and ass" might rest. Christ took for granted that the strict law of the Sabbath should be broken to rescue an animal from danger. And His likening of Himself to a shepherd was a plain approval of the care with which the sick and tired of the flock were borne in the arms or gently led. Part of the description of a "good man" is that he is "merciful to his beast." The Bible deals, also, with the effect which cruelty, or even want of fine feeling about animals, has on the nature. We see this plainly in the commandment, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

There cannot but be much suffering in the world of lower being. It is one great mystery that man's comfort and even life make this necessary. But there might be far less than there is. Death may be painless or almost so. There is a gentle way of doing most things that are commonly done with roughness. Few are really cruel, unless they have made themselves so. Most people who seem cruel are only stupid or unthinking. The man who, knowing the agony he gives, will "job" a horse's mouth with the bit, or the man who takes pleasure in the torture even of a rat, is a most abominable and rare sort of man. Hardly any man looks more foolish and contemptible than a stupid driver who has lost command over his horse and himself. The animal that ought to rule does not know how. Frightened and angry himself, he irritates and frightens the horse, that would gladly obey a firm, gentle will and hand. He is too awkward to make his wishes known, and punishes his victim for his own fault. Want of knowledge and thought accounts for most cases of over-driving, and of working animals in an unfit state. People who think will, for their own sake, avoid giving wanton pain. They know that, when animals are ill-used and fretted, their strength is less, and is less willingly put forth, and lasts a shorter time.

Ignorance and thoughtlessness are no excuse for cruelty.

They are grave faults; because men ought to learn and think. The way we deal with the lower animals shows what we are, and helps to make us what we are to be, as truly as the way we deal with our fellow-men. We are in God's world, and are given power over God's creatures. We should remember that we are in the image of God, and should prove our fitness for the place of rule in which He has put us. Love shows itself in small things, and we can show love to God by little kindnesses to His birds and beasts. The cry of each wronged creature goes up to its God against us; and the wrong is a sin upon our souls. We have a responsibility that reaches very far; we cannot get rid of it by forgetting or making little of it. Some people think they can be "religious," while they wrong their fellow-men in word and deed, whenever it seems to suit their own ends. Those who know what religion is show the spirit of it in their whole life, even in their treatment of the meanest animal to which their God has given feeling.

Heaven's King
Keeps register of everything;
And nothing may we use in vain,
Ev'n beasts must be with justice slain.

SPARE THE BIRDS.

ONE evening long ago, when I was just old enough to be trusted with a gun, I was on my way home after a day's shooting. There was a charge in one barrel, which I wished to get rid of before going into the house. A little hedge-sparrow perched on a bush before me, and without a thought I shot it. I went to pick it up. It lay on the grass on its side wounded, and as I came up, it turned its head towards me. As long as I live I shall never forget the look in that little bird's eye. It seemed to say, as plainly as looks could, "You have killed me.

What harm did I ever do you? And what good am I to you now?" I was as thoughtless as most boys of my age, but I felt myself utterly shamed. I would have given all the money I had to bring back the life that was the bird's all. I often now, after twenty-five years or more, seem to see that little bird's eye turned on me with gentle, pitiful reproach.

The life of God's creatures is from God, and we have no right to take it away without reason. Not a sparrow falls without our Father's marking it; and we may be quite sure He counts it sin to make one of them fall in mere sport or carelessness. We are not the lords of creation, who may do as we please with those beings that God has gifted with powers of joy. They are in our hands for use, not for abuse. They are not given us that we may sport with their pain, and make our hearts harder, while we torment or kill them.

Some people are less cruel than stupid. They destroy as enemies their best friends. Birds do take a little fruit and corn, but they far prefer the insects and worms that are the real foes of farmers and gardeners. They pay well by their work for far more than they eat. There is no man more short-sighted than he who kills the little birds. A cottager saw a bird busy, as he thought, eating his peas. He shot it. When he picked it up, he found a large worm in its mouth. The bird was defending, not destroying, and death was its reward. A settler in the far south had visited England, and was bringing out to his foreign home a quantity of English sparrows whose usefulness he knew well. The ship stopped at Havana, and the custom-house officer demanded duty on the birds. Rather than pay this, their owner let them go. They flew to a building called the "desecrated church," and there increased fast. The people guard them as most precious friends. While in other towns flies and crawling insects are a plague, Havana itself is comparatively free. The sparrows live on what is a nuisance to man, and destructive to vegetation.

TRUTHFULNESS.

LIAR is the hardest name by which a man can be called. No one can quietly bear to have it said that he has "told a lie." The words liar and lie seem to speak of the worst shame and dishonour. So much is this the case that the very sound of them gives a shock to anyone of high mind. It is felt that they ought not to be used when any other words will do. They are not much heard except among the low and coarse. Does this mean that people have grown truthful, and that there is less need to call things by plain names? Or does it mean that things are no better than they were, and that only the names of them have changed? The answer cannot be given off hand as one would wish. People are apt to be more jealous about what they and their words and deeds are called, than about what they are. There does not seem to be the same straightforward honour in the world that there used to be. A larger number of crooked, underhand ways seem to be taken for granted in the dealings of man with man. The old-fashioned love of truth, for its own sake, to be acted on at all costs, is not taught and is not felt in the old way.

Christ is "The Truth," and all who are His must, first of all, be true. He welcomes those who seek Him without guile, pure in heart, with a single-minded aim. The evil one is the "father of lies;" all that is false is from him and of him. He draws men away from God by the lies he tells them, and he keeps them away by the lies he teaches them to tell with their lives and lips. Men can get to be like their tempter, with no sense left in them of the worth of truth and the shame of falsehood. "He that loveth and maketh a lie" shall be shut out from the holy city: and we are told again that "all liars" shall have their portion with the lost. The word "all" seems to enclose the whole class, of whatever sort, however they show themselves

untrue. God's sentence will take them all in, giving no heed to the nice distinctions which men's customs or interests may cause them to make.

Truth is to be loved for its own sake. It is an end in itself: but it is also a means to all good ends. Without it all things fall into confusion; men cannot trust one another. They work in the dark, not knowing with what they have to deal. Words and acts do not tell what speakers and doers are: the means of intercourse have lost their value. And the evil spreads. What is common soon rouses less and less dislike, its place comes to be given it as a matter of course. The temptation is not easily resisted to meet falsehood with falsehood. Honest men become untrue, that they may meet and outwit rogues with their own weapons.

It is hard to be quite true. Those who are most careful of their honour know how watchful they must be, if they are to keep it free from stain. The heart is deceitful above all things; it is ready to mislead and betray. When there is no straight way to reach an end, a crooked one can always be found, and what seems a good excuse for taking it.

First of all, what effort is needful if we would be true with ourselves! We do not like to be humbled by a clear knowledge of what we are, and of our ways of life, and of the motives and ends of what we do. We shrink from the earnest toil to which a full knowledge of our duty would call us. So we are tempted to speak smooth things to ourselves, to flatter our self-esteem, to let ourselves off easily. How great a triumph to master this meanness, to get the habit of trying to look on ourselves as men see us and as God knows us, and to say out the truth plainly to ourselves! Though our hearts may condemn us of all else, we can feel that we are true, that we try to know the worst; we are dealing with our highest interests honestly, and can have good hope of reaching better things. True with ourselves, we have taken the first step towards being true with our neighbour and with God.

Between man and man how much untruth there is! the

customs of the world have so dulled men's consciences that the standard of truth is low. Men say openly that no business could be done if they always called things by their right names, and spoke the simple truth. Thus a place is claimed for falsehood, as if it were part of the machinery of trade. In the common intercourse of daily life much of the talk of many people is mere untruth. They repeat as facts what they know to be false, or have no good cause to think true. They add to stories, dressing them up to make them more welcome to the malice or curiosity of the hearers. They hint at what they dare not boldly say for fear of being met by a plain denial. They let their tongues run on, heedless how they wrong or mislead. One of the worst forms of untruth is that in which there is much truth mixed, so that the bad coin, plainly worthless by itself, is passed among the good. What is said is true as far as it goes; but something is left out which would change the whole look of the case; or something is added which, in a few words, turns a whole true story into a falsehood. There is often dishonesty in silence as well as in speech, in manner as well as in words. A carefully guided tongue may get a man a name for honesty, while his life is a carefully planned deceit. Or a heedless tongue may be so well known as to be always distrusted, while the man's heedless life may deceive himself. The political world is the great market-place of lies. No one looks for truth in politics. Newspapers vie with one another in the low tricks of party strife. The best champion is the man who can so put all things that they tell against the other side. No straightforward man is fit for the work. Of course a man of honour must be true always. He cannot be true in private life, and a low schemer as a public man. The dirt sticks to him at home and at church, as well as in his office. The saddest part of all this is that no one disowns what he or his party may gain by falsehood. A "gentleman" who would be insulted by being offered part of the spoils of a pickpocket, takes gladly political advantages that he knows to be unfairly got. A receiver is as bad as the thief. A member of

a band of brigands is as guilty as a single highwayman. Alas that in party strife the Church is no clearer of fault than the world! Most controversy bears the brand of untruthfulness: and how often do we hear of religious leaders disowning and rebuking falsehoods which their reckless followers use? How often do men speak out and act boldly, in the faith that God has no need of lies, which must always hinder and not help the cause of truth?

True to God! Who can so far blind himself as to say that he is clear from guilt? We do not see God, or hear His voice. Those who are quite true with man seem to feel sometimes as if the same rules of honour need not bind them in their dealings with God. They speak to Him without the right care to know what they mean and to mean what they say. They make promises lightly, and they break them lightly. There is not at all the shame felt in owning falsehood to God that would be felt if they had been untrue to man. But a lie is a lie, to whomsoever it is told; and he is untrue who tells it. Each broken promise, each unreal profession, brands with shame, and dulls the sense of honour, and helps to form a habit of untruthfulness. Our God is a Person. He gives His word to us, and keeps it. He hears the vows we make to Him, He knows us, and sees how far our words tell what is in our hearts, and what we mean. He knows what care we take to try to be true with Him, and to treat Him as one who cannot be deceived. Honesty with our neighbours, plainness with ourselves, will not prove us true, unless we strive so to live and pray, that God may see in us no guile.

FORBEARANCE.

FORBEAR is an old English word. It means to bear forth or away from. It came to be used in the sense of holding back or keeping off. We use it now with one

meaning. He is said to show forbearance who does not do against others what he has the power to do, and what he seems to have good, just cause to do. A man forbears to claim his hard rights, forbears to speak or act so as to give pain. To bear is not the same thing as to forbear. To bear is to suffer, or be quiet under suffering. To forbear is to hold oneself back from saying or doing what would make others suffer. We think of forbearance not as a sign of fear and weakness, but as a sign of gentleness and good-will towards the timid and the feeble. It tells of strength; not only of strength that is restrained, but of strength that keeps that strength in check. The stronger anyone is, the greater is the forbearance he can show, and the more does his forbearance prove him to be great.

We think of God as a forbearing God. His love comes to us and makes itself felt in this form first. God bears our wrongs against Him: He forbears to use His almighty power in dealing out the punishment we deserve. He spares us that we may be won to own His gentleness and feel the shame of our sin, and so may seek the blessings which His love bestows. What do we not owe to God's forbearance? Day by day we make new claims upon it. Each thought and word and act of sin might draw down on us a stroke of wrath, the justice of which we could not gainsay: but God is strong, and so He is patient. He is strong in love to us; and He wills to lead, rather than to drive us. He acts in all things so as to win us, in the truest and best way, to trust His loving kindness.

What God shows to us, we ought to show to one another. He means us to pass on His love; He gives us grace to be like Him. Knowing how He forbears with us, we feel bound to be forbearing; and we can look to Him, sure that He will give us of His own power to be what He teaches us to be. We have, indeed, no claim on any fellow-creatures, like that which God has on us! No one can wrong us as we wrong God: we have no right over others, such as He has over us. But all of us have scope for forbearance. In our every-day life, at home, and among our friends, with those who are younger or who are in any

way in our power, wisdom and kindness are often put to the test. We are reminded that it is well to forbear in word or deed. Want of forbearance leads to strife and sin, as well as gives useless pain. How many sore hearts might have been spared their life-long sorrow by a little forbearance in time! How many hearts have been hardened by rough harshness that might have been kept true and gentle! How many friends have been parted, how much influence for good has been thrown away, by lack of forbearance!

We have no right to look for perfection in those with whom we have to do. No one is all bad. Perhaps all are better than they seem to those who think they know them. Few are not open to be won by kindness. Forbearance gives time for those who have done wrong to think calmly of their faults, and for others to act calmly. "Slow to speak, slow to wrath" is a wise, safe rule. Forbearance is a part of the charity which "vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly," without which we are nothing.

AN OFFENDER FOR A WORD.

"SWIFT to hear" is a good rule. It is right that the ear be open always to catch what may make us wiser or happier, or what may help us to do others good. But every word must not be taken to heart, and some must be put out of our thoughts as soon as we can, lest they make us quick to speak, and quick to wrath. "Silence is golden," and so is that sort of deafness which lets much that we cannot fail to hear be as if we had not heard it. Words that our friends say, and words said of them, are often "very swords," that will make our own hearts bleed, and will lose us the joy of trust and love, if we are not firmly on our guard.

There is no part of worldly or heavenly wisdom, no principle of right common sense, which is not taught us in the Bible. If the 21st and 22nd verses of Ecclesiastes vii.

were well learned and acted on, the great calm which would come over the squally sea of life would startle men. The words are these: "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."

Most of us deal with our friends as we deal with God. Long years of blessing pass, and we take for granted all we have; we enjoy it as our right; we thank Heaven, with no true thought of the great fatherly love that hedges us round from harm and pours out good things so richly at our feet. At last God reminds us that our health, or our friends, or our money, are His, not ours. Some loss or trial comes, and at once God seems to us hard, forgetful, unloving: we forget all that has been bright so long; we think we aim at a great height of virtue, if we try to bow to His will and to go on trusting. God, indeed, is always the same, though His ways of showing what He is, in His watchful care, change with our needs. So the likeness between Him and our friends whom He gives us cannot be perfect. But what is hard in our friends must not cool our friendship or break our trust in them, any more than what seems hard in God's dealings should interrupt our faith in Him. If one who has been long our friend speaks in a way that sounds rough, or says of us what wounds our pride, why should we make him an "offender for a word?" Why should we set this against all that has bound us to one another? The best way, nearly always, is to let it be to us as if it had not been said, to keep it out of our heart, and, as far as we can, to put it out of our heads. Tongues often move before thoughts and feelings, and say far more than is meant. Perhaps our friend has been unwell, or worried by other things; perhaps we have vexed him in some unknown way, and he has mistaken us; perhaps what he said was only a sort of growl at himself, not at us at all. Perhaps he would have been glad to get back the rough words as soon as they left his lips, and feels them more than we. Perhaps they are just, and only prove that our friend's friendship does not blind him to plain faults, in

spite of which he feels kindly towards us. Perhaps, if we think, we can remember trying him more than he tries us now, with harder words than his. Men often speak heedlessly in the very boldness which close friendship gives. Everyone, sometimes, says to or of his best friends what would cause a lasting breach, if made the most of by jealous self-love or watchful vanity. A wise man loves peace, and values friendship too much to let chance words upset his calm of mind or rob him of his friends. Men who know the world can take the tales of busybodies for what they are worth. Words hardly ever go far without growing more in number, and sharper in power of giving pain. What is spoken as a good-humoured jest comes home as a solemn charge or a nasty sneer. It is not worth while to look into many of the tales which separate chief friends. It may be well to do so with one or two, so as to be able to judge of the rest. The right way with most of them seems to be to shake them off our minds as we do the dust from our clothes, and try to go on as if we had not heard them. While we take care not to lose friends for what they say, we must be warned not to risk loss of friends by our own rash or hasty or uncourteous words. Politeness is a great safeguard of friendship. Silence at the right time and deafness at the right time are part of our duty to our neighbour, as well as great helps to the peace and brightness of our lives.

SHOOT AT THE SECONDS.

THERE was a time when the laws of society bound a man who had been insulted to give his insulter the opportunity of doing him a further wrong by killing him or making him a murderer. He was taken in hand by a friend and set up to be shot at—perhaps to die with the guilt of blood on his soul. Often the "friends" had more to do with the matter than the principals. Often, if the

"friends" had not meddled, "honour" would have been satisfied without fighting. There were many men who loved to get up duels in which there was no danger to themselves.

A story is told of two young officers, quartered in India, who were close friends, and lived almost like brothers. One night at mess, when a good deal of wine had been drunk, one of them took offence at something the other said, and threw a glass of wine at him. Two old officers at once led them both away, and a meeting was arranged for the next morning. As the hours passed, the young men cooled, and, full of trouble at the thought of the sad end to which their friendship had come, wandered out of their rooms. Turning the corner of a verandah they stumbled against one another. Each said at once, "I beg pardon." Brought face to face, the absurdity of their position came upon them, and they could not help laughing, like boys, as they were. One said to the other, "What is all this about? I don't want to shoot you." The other replied, "I forget how it all began; I am sure I don't want to shoot you: those old fellows have done all the mischief. They seem determined that we must fight." "Well," said the first, "I'll tell you what we'll do. It is their quarrel more than ours. I'll fire at your second, and you fire at mine." So it was arranged. When they were placed, the next morning, one second got a ball through his hat, and the other one a ball through his coat-tails. The words that followed may be imagined. The young men were put up again, with many cautions not to let their "nervousness" make them repeat their mistake. But just as the signal was about to be given, both seconds shouted and ducked, each finding that a pistol was pointed at his head. They declared that it was no use going on with such foolish "nervous" boys, and a way was found of settling the quarrel.

Fewer quarrels would end badly, did people act as these two young men did. In most cases "friends" have most to do with breaches of charity, and lasting estrangements. Were people left to themselves, misunderstandings would

in most cases be soon cleared up, and even deeds and words of thoughtlessness or unkindness would be explained, forgiven, and forgotten. But others join, and in what seems like jealousy for their friend's honour, make big what is small, and make a deep wound of what is only a scratch. They make a public dispute of what ought to be left a private question for the two principals to settle by themselves. If people would "shoot at" those who volunteer to be their seconds, and teach them to mind their own business, the world would be less saddened by quarrels fought out to the bitter end.

I BEG YOUR PARDON.

SOME young officers were talking together, when one of them swore. He at once checked himself, and turned to me, saying, "I beg your pardon." He felt that it was bad manners to swear when a clergyman was by; and that it was due to himself to apologise. I knew him very well, and said, "Never mind me; but there is someone else here whom you ought to think of." "Who is that?" he asked, not catching my meaning, and then went on, "Ah, I see you mean your Master; I am afraid we don't think enough of that."

The apology was a sign of right feeling. The oath which slipped out heedlessly would, he knew, be unpleasant to me. If he failed in thought and reverence, he respected my reverence, or that which he took for granted a clergyman would have. He did not want to put me in the position of either seeming not to mind when God's Name was taken in vain, or of finding fault. So he acted like a gentleman, and begged my pardon. He was wrong in not remembering that his words fell on another ear. Had he done so, his first thought would have been to beg God's pardon.

There is too little care for the feelings of those who

honour God and are pained by any slight cast on Him. There is too little firmness in claiming for Him whom we think we fear and love, the courtesy which we claim for ourselves. Many a man, who would face the world to shield a friend's good name, will hear God blasphemed, and make no sign, either by sad silence or by out-spoken protest.

Many who pride themselves on their good breeding, care not how much pain they give to those who are jealous for their Saviour. People who would not feel being charged with sin, ought to remember how very vulgar this sort of sin is, how coarse in mind and feeling it shows them to be. No one has even small right to the name of gentleman or lady, who does not treat with tender respect the religious convictions of others. That man is false to God, who does not feel wrongs done against Him, at least as much as any insult that could be offered to himself.

But how little thought most of us have of the holy and fatherly eye that is ever watching us! We would not be unfaithful to a friend, or be in any least way untrue with men; but we break vows made to God lightly, as if He were not a real being. We promise Him anything, and feel no obligation binding us. We would not treat a neighbour with discourtesy; but we are apt to think that it is no matter how we treat the Almighty. We watch our words and deeds, lest we lose a friend's good opinion; but when only God is near, we are under small restraint, and are little ashamed if we fall. Surely the remembrance of His nearness ought to be a strong power to keep us right, and if we forget ourselves, we should lose no time in begging God's pardon.

BOTH SIDES.

A CLERGYMAN in Cheshire had a large parish, with many people who had much spare time. This time was not all laid out to good purpose. A large part of it was spent in meddling and fault-finding. Every now and then, some of them became so full of righteous grief at what seemed the glaring wrong-doing of their neighbours, that they had to go about seeking sympathy. The Vicar was commonly one of the first to whom they went. They would not have thought of telling him of their own faults, or asking his help to overcome them. Had he told them that possibly it might be well to do so, they would have been hurt and angry. But they cared, as it seemed, far more for their neighbours' souls than for their own. They thought it their duty to bring every evil tale and suspicion to their clergyman, that he might know what very bad people lived in his parish, and that he might be sure of their grief about it. In most cases the stories they brought were of wrongs done to themselves, or disputes in which they claimed to have shown great gentleness and Christian patience under very hard trial from the coarseness or selfishness of others.

The old Vicar had a short way with them. He received them kindly and courteously; he told them how sorry he was that they were troubled. But before he let them begin their complaints, he said, "Of course I will be glad to hear you, and give you what help I can; but it is right for me to say that if I listen to your story, I shall be bound to go to the person accused and ask for his story, so that I may know both sides. Of course, if anyone came and laid a charge against you, you would think me very wrong to take its truth for granted, without giving you an opportunity of clearing it up. I must deal out the same justice to those against whom you bring a charge. Now, take time to think about it; and make up your

mind whether to say nothing, and try to forget all this, or else to tell me all you want to say, and let me then go to the other and find out what his view of the case is." It need hardly be said that in nine cases out of ten the Vicar was told nothing; the person who came full of grievances which he longed to pour out, shrank from the prospect of having his story set side by side with another story. He was often led, also, to try to put himself in the place of his neighbour, and so to take a fairer, calmer view of things. Often he came to the conclusion that, whether his neighbour had indeed been wrong or not, one thing was quite plain, that he had himself been very foolish.

The old Vicar's plan worked well. He was told very few unpleasant tales. He was able to think better of his people, and his example came to be followed in the parish, to the great help of the cause of peace.

NEITHER OF US.

THERE lived in Ireland, in the beginning of this century, a man well known for his love of duelling and his love of blundering. He always fought when he could, and he had so got into the habit of making blunders to amuse his friends, that he at last found it hard ever to talk sense.

One night, in a club-house in Dublin, he saw, as he thought, a man who had insulted him some weeks before. This man thought he was a person whom he had long been following with a horsewhip. A meeting was soon arranged, and on a cold, foggy, winter morning they fired two or three shots each, without any harm being done. The seconds put them nearer, as they said, to waste no more time. When they got close enough to see one another's faces, they stared and started, and one exclaimed, "Why, you're not Archy Devine!" "Not I,"

said the other; "and you're not Billy Staples. Here we've been firing away all the morning, and now we find out that it's neither of us!" So the two made friends over their mistake.

This is more than a funny story, said to be a true one. It is a parable. There is, perhaps, no one who cannot look back on mistakes of the same sort, which have cost him time and worry, and made him in the end feel foolish and ashamed. This is what happens. We take it into our heads that someone is a person who has done us wrong, that he is selfish, rude, unkind, or that his character is bad in some very grievous way. Our manner makes him judge us hardly. He takes for granted at once that he only does right in treating us as what we seem to be. Then we shoot at one another through the fog of prejudice and misunderstanding, not seeing one another's true faces. Hard words pass, and deeds of ill-will. "Friends" help to keep the quarrel fierce, and try to bring us closer that we may fight so as to hurt. It is well if harm is not done which cannot be undone, and which leaves us helpless in vain regret. But often the fog clears away, and we find that he at whom we have been aiming is not the person we took him for. And he finds that we are not the foe he thought us. It has been all a mistake from first to last. We have spent much time, have lost much peace, have fallen into much sin. The only good that has come of it is the warning not to be rash in judging what others are, and hasty in acting upon our judgment.

So we may learn to be patient with those who are bitter against us. It is not indeed against us, but against what they think us to be—quite another sort of being—that their anger is aroused. Let us wait quietly, and try to show what we indeed are, and let us be careful to be what we would like to be thought.

NEAR TO THE LORD.

MR. B. had a son whose life was not in tune with his words. He talked very piously, and seemed very devout; but he did things which startled his friends, and made the ungodly scoff. A friend spoke to Mr. B. about his son's ways; but the old man seemed to have no misgiving. He said, "Ah! Willie lives so near the Lord that he can safely do those things."

No wonder that Willie's life was no honour to himself or to religion, if he had been brought up to think that he could live in sin "near the Lord." He that names the Name of Christ must depart from iniquity. He that would live near Christ must let Christ guide his life. How near to the Lord a man lives is not proved by what he can say of the Lord, or even by what he can say to Him. Christ will be Lord over the whole man always, not only over his tongue sometimes. He leads those who are near Him each step of their way. By faith they know Him near, and feel His Presence giving them hope and power. The truth that He sees and hears and watches over them, that He is with and in them, influences all they do and all they are. Those who are indeed near to the Lord are most careful lest sin part them from Him. They are most jealous not to grieve Him, or to bring dishonour on His Name.

WORK OR IDLENESS.

THERE is so much to be done in the world and in the Church that the work of each one is wanted. No one has a right to say that he is so helpless and useless that he has no place given to him. Nor has he a right to say

that he is so great that he can stand by and look on while others toil. God has given powers to all whom He has made, and those powers are given to be put to good use. Each has his own work, about which God will ask him, when the time of work is over and the night comes. If the work is undone the servant shall be treated as "wicked and slothful."

Besides, work is given as a training to the worker. A living being grows and gains strength by what he does; powers that are left idle soon fail and are lost. No man can become what he ought to be at the end of his life on earth, except by that course of duty which God has planned to leave its mark upon him. But it is not only what is done, but how it is done, that has an effect upon the doer. Working carelessly, slothfully, idly, makes the worker careless, slothful, idle, even though the work be got through and finished somehow.

Every act has more or less power of forming a habit, which is part of the whole character. He who only has it in his power to do little things may do them well, and so may grow to be stronger and better than he who is called to high duties and fulfils them with half his heart and force.

Every one is bound to find out as best he can what God wills him to do in life: then he is bound to find out how he can best act his part. "Six days shalt thou labour" is a law which lays hold of all, and that all must obey who wish to be at last met by the welcome—"Well done, good and faithful servant." There are as many varieties of work as there are people: but the one charge and warning must be heard by all—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Men are not gifted highly that they may be free to be lazy, or may be saved trouble; but that they may do more. Hardships and difficulties are not meant to stop work, but to rouse more heart and zeal and perseverance. Sloth is a deadly sin, which kills the soul. No true honest work done for God is vain in its influence on the world, and in its power to draw down good and blessing on the doer.

WORK.

HARD work is the lot of most men. "Six days shalt thou labour" is a law of God which few can disobey. The needs of life force us to our tasks of one sort or another, and keep us busy. If we wish to have food and clothing, and to keep our place in the world, we must work and earn. One man toils with his hands, a second with his brain, a third cannot get on without using both equally. Moreover we all are bound to do something to add to the wealth and well-being of the world, in return for what our living in it costs. We owe work for our keep, for what we use day by day. We have no right to live in the world and profit by the toil of other men, while we do no good ourselves. A tree that bears no fruit wastes to no purpose the strength of the soil in which it grows. It gives no payment for what it gets. It is worse than useless.

Our work is thus not only a means by which we gain our living. It is a duty we owe our fellow-men. We are all bound together, and the least which the least does helps in some small way the welfare of mankind. Nothing right and honest is done in vain, or fails to improve the world. The man who gets together money and has skill in putting it to good use; the ploughman who makes the soil fit for the corn to grow; the spinner who makes the cotton worth more than when it came into his hands, adds each his little to the wealth of the world. While he earns his own food and clothing, he helps to make larger the stock of food or clothing which others need.

But there is more than this which men ought to keep in mind, to give them spirit in their toil, and make them feel it no drudgery, but a way of doing a high duty and rising towards high, noble ends. Our work is meant to improve ourselves and make us worth more, and fit for a nobler life where all we shall be given to do shall have no

trial in it and leave no weariness. We are not mere drudges, like a horse, put into the world to labour, and with no farther end that we can know of. We are sons of God, who belong to heaven, and who are heirs of heaven. Nothing that we do has its end here. All bears in some way on our eternity. All our tasks are given us with a meaning. We may grow stronger and better and truer by the spirit with which we do our most common daily tasks. Whatsoever we do, we may do it to the glory of God and in the name of the Lord Jesus, in His strength, one with Him. If we do it as well as we can, remembering that God's eye is on us, we make it an act of worship, we draw strength from God with which to do it. That strength stops in and with us, and we go to our next piece of work, one step farther on towards what God wants us to be, and towards what our work is meant to do its part in making us. This is what makes toil honourable, not that it is done to feed and clothe the body only, not only that it is done as part of what makes the world prosperous, but that it is done by an immortal being, whose whole training God has planned, and for whose eternal good all things are meant to work together.

This is a great thought to get well into our minds, and to keep before us. While we labour, we need not feel that we are spending strength and life, with only small return of wages, soon gone. Far less need we feel that the hard close toil of weary days makes us unable to care for our souls, or to be thorough in our religion. While we labour at our every-day tasks, we need not labour only for the meat that perisheth, but be seeking that which endureth. The honest, well-done work of a God-fearing man is a true seeking of the Kingdom of God. As truly, in its way, as prayer, it is worship and a help towards heaven. No task is mean which is done by a child of God, who does it for God, and under God's eye. Nothing is vain which brings out the soul of man to firmer courage and patience and perseverance. No work is ill paid which wins God's blessing, and prepares for the employments and rewards of heaven.

We must not part our lives into two, and live one for

time and another for eternity. We have only one life, and all that life is for eternity. There are times when we should turn away from the world and be alone with God, and think of nothing but Him and heaven. These times should help us to bring a religious spirit into our common work and our harmless useful pleasures. There are no times when we may feel thoughts of God out of place, or when we need feel that what we are doing has no value in bringing us on towards heaven and preparing us for it. The Lord Jesus was "about His Father's business" while He toiled at Joseph's bench, as truly as when He preached in Galilee or hung upon the Cross.

THE WAYS OF GOD.

GOD can do all things. He can make whatever He likes be a means of carrying grace to men. God is all wise; and He chooses the best way of doing what He does. God is all good; and He does all so as to help us most. God has a right, also, to ask us to wait for and to come for His gifts in any way He pleases to name. He knows why He fixes on one way rather than another. He sometimes lets us see some of His reasons, but not always. When He hides them, He has cause; and we must not complain, but thank Him that He does all for our good.

God's ways are not like ours. It would be bad for us if they were. We cannot expect to be able to understand all God's dealings. There are many things that have to do with our daily common duty, which we ought to think of more than we do; and we have no time to waste on matters out of our reach. We must take great care lest, in heedless talk about sacred things, we really find fault with or laugh at God. Many people get into the way of jesting about the rules and customs, and even the Sacraments of the Church, forgetting that the wisest and holiest of men are sure that these things are ordained by God. That a

doctrine is strange does not prove it untrue. Some of those most agreed upon are most strange. If the doctrine be from God, we must humbly believe it. Till it be proved not from Him, we must fear to treat it with scorn or ridicule, lest perhaps we mock God.

That a law seems needless does not free us from the duty of obeying. Though we do not see the importance of it, perhaps God does. At all events, if it be God's law, that is enough to make the sin of slighting it great.

Again, that a Sacrament does not look as if it promised much does not prove that we can safely do without it. Some of the customs and rules of the Jewish Church would be scouted at as absurd, if any *man* had ordered their use. God chose them, and all who neglected them were cut off from Him.

We must not ask whether everything in the Church is as we would have arranged if we had been in God's place. We must simply learn all we can of His truth, His will, and His means of grace, that we may show our faith and obedience and desire to be holy. We have no right to find fault with God's ways of teaching and helping us; our place is to be thankful that He blesses us as He does. He has a right to do what He will with His own. Many doctrines which are only startling to the proud who remain afar off, become the dearest comfort to the humble, who come earnestly within their influence. Laws which are shrunk from as chains, become like the strengthening, guiding hand of a friend. Sacraments which look like unmeaning empty forms, are found by devout experience to be real means of living union with a living Saviour.

HOLY COMMUNION.

CHRIST lovingly calls you to His holy table. Why do you not come? Christ asks you to show faith in Him by taking part in the holy act of worship in which His

Church makes memorial of His death. Why do you hold back, as if you had no part in Him? Christ offers you His Body and His Blood to be your soul's food, to make you strong and glad. Why do you turn away, as if you could do without His gifts, or had no value for them?

No one ought to draw near to God, if he is not true and earnest in what he does. The prayer of the wicked, that is, of the wicked who do not wish and mean to mend, is an abomination to the Lord. He who sees into our hearts is not mocked. The careless must not trifle with the awful God. The unbelieving must not insult the God of truth. Those whose hearts hold fast to sin must not think to be welcomed in the courts of the All Holy. Those who have no longing for purity must not come, seeking grace which they do not mean to use. It is not only before we come to the Holy Communion, but before we take God's name on our lips in any way, that we ought to look well at our hearts. A more careful preparation is needed before we draw near to the Lord's table. Men may be fit to pray who are not yet ready to receive the Holy Communion. But this is sure, that those who are content to go on unfit for Holy Communion are not fit to pray. It may be, and is, well for many to delay coming; but it is not well for any to put off getting ready to come. All are bidden; none may turn away. All must begin at once to prepare. All must come as soon as they are ready. If Christ calls us, is it no slight to Him to stay away? If He bids us do something as a memorial of Him, do we lose nothing by leaving it undone? If He holds out for our worn weary souls the food that strengthens and refreshes us, are we sure that, wanting it, our souls will not wither and starve and die? Have we any right to look for life and heaven, while we put from us this great means of grace? If we are not trying to be fit to meet Christ in the Holy Communion, how can we hope to lift up our heads in joy when we see Him on His throne?

Why are you not a communicant? You say you "are not worthy." You are quite right: no one is worthy. If you thought you were, then indeed it would be sin for you

to come. All must own their sin, and plead for mercy as their only hope. If you are taking no steps to become less unworthy, then think of your sad state, and be warned in time; but do not dare to come yet. If you feel your sin a weary burden, then it is you indeed that Jesus calls to come and lay down your load, and take the rest and strength with which His love will meet you.

You say you "do not understand it." Of course you do not: no one does. You do not understand how your prayers reach God, and God's help comes to you. Nor do you understand how food and air renew the waste of your body. But you can learn enough to guide you. God will take care of His part. You can learn what you have to expect from God, and how you are to seek it. And you can learn the way in which God bids you prepare to take and use His gifts.

You say you are too much "tried with family and worldly cares." Is that a reason why you should refuse help to cheer and guide you under them? Do not you, of all others, need to use the means of grace which will bring you close to Christ, and make His calm of spirit and His courage and holiness your own? You have hard work to do. God does not mean this to keep you from Him, but to drive you to His shelter and His help.

You say you could not "live up to it." If God calls you to a higher place, He will make you able to fill it. He will give you grace in the Communion to live the life of a communicant. Whatever work He sets before you, He will find you strength to do. Whatever battle He sends you to fight, He will arm you for. Are you trying to "live up to" your place as a Christian? Do you want to mount higher? Then do not fear; God will lead you on, and you shall triumph.

You say that "many people who come are no better, but only worse." That is no reason why you should not be a great deal better. If the food of one man harms him, this ought not to make you starve yourself. If one man's house is burned, you do not put out all your fires and refuse to be warm.

Christ calls you, almost with His dying breath. Do you doubt His love, or do you doubt His hate of the sin which spoiled man, and made man's Saviour die? What are the true reasons for your neglect? Ask and find out, as if you were trying to know what God knows about you.

Do you stay from Communion because you do not care to take the trouble of preparing for it? Are you afraid of being laughed at, more than you are afraid of losing God and heaven? Is there some pet sin, some wrong way of gain, some low pleasure, which you cannot make up your mind to part with, and which you choose, as worth more than heaven? Do you think you are wiser than God, and know the needs of your own soul better than Christ? Do you think you can do without the Holy Communion, and so be more free to take your own way, and save time and thought for the world? Very much ashamed would many so-called Christians be, did an angel write on the church walls, each Sunday, the true reasons which keep them from Communion. If you are wise, and care at all for your soul, you will let no time pass till you know what keeps you back. If you have no good ground for delay, come at once. If you have good ground for delay, then do your best, with God's help, to come soon. Let your delay be only that you may come with more true penitence and longing, loving faith. If you have good ground for staying away altogether, then fear and tremble. The only good reason for this is that the heart is sold to sin, and that you will not claim it back, and give it to God. You are right to make up your mind never to come to the Lord's table if you can say, "I am a hard sinner, and I mean to be one still. I do not care for the love of God, or the work of Christ. I do not mind what God says; I put no faith in His promises, or value on His gifts. I choose sin and the world." Say this to God, if you can.

Lose no time. Days and years go fast. Begin at once, lest when you wish to begin, you find it is too late. Do not risk having to meet God without what this means of grace can do for your soul. God knows all that hinders you. He knows it need not keep you away, for He calls you

still. Get rid of your laziness and cowardice, and love of sin; believe God when He speaks, wish for His grace; then nothing will stop you, God will clear your path.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

I WENT one morning to ask about a boy who had been absent from Sunday School. "James was not at school again yesterday," I said to the father; "did you send him?" "Yes, Sir, I did," was the reply; "he's been playing truant again: he gets worse and worse. You see, Sir, the reason of it is this: I can't do my duty to that boy. I've got heart complaint, and if I was to get into one of those passions, I might die in it. But, I'll tell you what you must do, Sir; you mustn't take any of your light canes, for he'll not care for that: take a good besom end, and lay on to him." He had hardly done speaking, when the boy came in with his mother. As soon as Mrs. —— learned the state of the case, she showed that she had no fear of heart complaint: with one blow she made the boy reel to the end of the room.

Poor boy! No wonder that he was one of the hardest cases to deal with, and that he looked on all as foes to be outwitted or openly defied. This father thought he could not "do his duty," because he feared to let himself get into a rage. This mother had no thought of any means of rule but rough words and hard blows. Poor boy! his was an extreme case; but there are many fathers and mothers as stupid and unfit to have the bringing up of a child as these were. It is bad enough that two coarse ill-tempered people should make one another more wicked and miserable than they would have been alone. But it is fearful that children should, with no fault of their own, be in the power of those who make their lives wretched and their natures bad.

Perhaps most children must be punished. It may be

that, in many cases, what is called corporal punishment is, if rightly used, more merciful than other kinds which are recommended instead of it. But, whatever way is chosen, it must be remembered that punishment is for the child's good, and not to vent the anger of the parent. It should be given as calmly and as carefully as a dose of medicine. No one who is out of temper can distinguish between accident and wilful wrong, between what shows an inward fault, and what only gives trouble. No one who is "in a passion" can "do his duty" to a child, by using the best means to help him to be and to do right. Children feel injustice keenly, and are quite alive to the weaknesses and faults of their elders. A child does not see why his passion, for which he is punished, is worse than that which his father shows while punishing him. He perhaps thinks that their places would be changed were he the stronger. An angry parent may frighten a child into submission for the time, but he will never win his trust, or gain an influence that will last. He who cannot control himself has no right to expect to rule others.

One thing must be kept in mind, which ought to make parents more patient. Faults in children come mostly from the faults of their fathers and mothers. They are little copies of the big failings of their elders, and are caused by them. Surely, then, they claim careful, kind, gentle treatment. And often, were prevention used, there would be less need of cure. Were more trouble taken to form character, and guide the life right, there would be fewer faults to correct and keep down. Very often children are treated as drovers treat cattle—beaten back with hard words and blows, because they do not know a way which they have never learned, and in which no one leads them. If fathers and mothers would try to be and do what they wish their children to be and do, they would need to use fewer words, and perhaps no blows. If they would make their children sure of them as friends and helpers and sympathisers, instead of trying to make them fear them, education would be happier for both.

Shame on the father whose step hushes the little ones'

free joy, and whose name is used as a bugbear to frighten them into "being good." Shame on the mother, whose child will not tell her of a fault, as he would run to her side when he has hurt himself. Great allowance must be made for "naughty children." No mercy should be shown to bad parents. Many people spoil those whom God has given to their care. Far more do so by hardness, and want of sympathy, than by over gentleness.

HOLY PLACES.

SOME men will call no day holy, on the plea that to them all days are alike holy. They will not keep Feasts or Fasts, on the plea that they ought never to forget self-denial and Christian joy, and should have all truths before them always. There may be those who live each hour in the same close communion with God, who never flag in watchful devotion, and never let one part of truth or duty hide others. But with most it must be feared that to make all days alike holy in name is to make no day holy indeed. Few who know themselves do not find it needful to go apart, now and then, and to spend some time alone with God. Few do not feel that if their religion is to have a strong and even growth, they must give special thought and care to each of its parts, one by one. They must, of course, serve God always, and try to be under the continual influence of all truth; but that they may be able to do this, they need to have stated times set apart for mourning or rejoicing before God, and to have each truth and duty enforced in its order.

As with times, so with places. Those who say that every spot of God's earth is holy say what is quite true; but when they go on to argue that no place is in any way holier than another, they say what is misleading. They do not make all places alike holy, but all alike unholy. We all know the power of certain places to call up sweet

or sad memories, and to revive wholesome feelings. Some scenes are filled with a strange power. We are reminded of old days when we were purer than we are. Friends of early years seem to rise up around us. We almost feel as if we heard their voices and looked into their eyes. We cannot be thoughtless: mind and heart are full and are earnest. So it is surely well that, when we meet to worship God, all should suggest the Divine Presence; and that as soon as we pass the door of God's House, the world and all that might weaken the power of the hallowed associations of the place, should be shut out. It is hard to fix thought, and to keep up our devotion to an unseen God. We need in our weakness, and we ought not to be denied, all the help we can gain from the feeling of being in God's House, where everything reminds us of Him.

God is, of course, everywhere. He was everywhere in the old Jewish days: yet there was a sense in which the place where Moses stood was holy ground. The burning bush marked a special presence of Him who is a consuming fire.

Again, God was so present in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, over and above the way in which He was present outside the veil. To believe this was no Jewish superstition; it was faith in the Word of God. And Christ threw no scorn on this faith. Did He not rather, in most marked and solemn manner, condemn those who showed want of reverence for holy places? Twice He drove the traders from the outer courts of the Temple, condemning a market held even as a convenience for worshippers, in a part of God's House which was hardly counted sacred by the Jews. He would not even allow a vessel to be carried through the Temple. So He gave His plain judgment, at the beginning and at the close of His ministry. And this seems answer enough to those who say that those were Jewish and that these are Christian days. Christ did not act so as to mislead. God is the same now, and we are what the Jews were in our weakness and forgetfulness. We need, as well as they, to watch and to be guarded against the beginning of irreverence. Besides, we have

more and not less cause to be awed by the Divine nearness in our houses of prayer. Just as the second Temple was more glorious, because Christ came to it, so our churches are more hallowed than the Temple was, by the comings of our Lord. He is indeed with His people all the days and everywhere; but He is present especially with the two or three who meet in His name. He is present yet more wonderfully, when He draws near to join with His faithful in pleading the merits of His Sacrifice, and to give them His Body and His Blood.

There is no place where God is not: man cannot flee from Him so as to be out of His sight or power. But man is able to draw nigh to Him, or to forsake Him. He can come to Christ and dwell in Him, or can refuse that blessed union. God does, in ways of His own choosing, and for His own ends of love or judgment, make Himself present at certain times and certain places, as He does not in others. This God says, and we need not find it hard to believe. The sun shines all over a field: with the help of a glass the rays can be concentrated on one spot. Light and warmth are still blessing everywhere; under the glass there is a heat that burns.

LIBERALITY.

IT is very strange how men like to be thought what they know they are not. They feel no shame for being so much worse than they seem, and for taking credit meant not for them but for the sort of person they are supposed to be. The good name they get does not stir them up to try to be worthy of it. They live as if the world's judgment were everything, and as if they need not care what God thinks of them, or what they think of themselves.

The word "liberality" is put to much base use. There is a true and there is a sham liberality. The false often shows best: for its aim is show; and it often has a look of

hearty dash which wins the good-will of the unthinking. Liberality belongs to the open-hearted and large-minded, to the generous and candid. Men claim and get credit for it who in matters of money are mean and selfish, and who in matters of faith or opinion are narrow-minded and intolerant.

Take the case of many a young man who has won a name for liberality by spending money freely. He gathers "friends," who are glad to eat and drink and enjoy themselves at his expense. Tradesmen court him; servants call him a "real gentleman." What is the truth about him? He is perhaps only false, selfish, vain, and indolent. He lays himself out to be thought richer than he is. He lives for flattery. He throws away his prospects and his self-respect for a little passing ease. More still: it may be that he wastes his parents' hard savings, and spends in careless folly what ought to pay for the education of his brothers and sisters, or add to the comfort of his parents' old age. Again, some take credit for liberality who lay out their money as a matter of hard business, who calculate coldly what return each sum spent will bring them in of profit or of honour. Some, again, who know that they are mean, do not try to change their character, but try to hide it, adding the meanness of hypocrisy to that of stinginess.

No one has a right to squander recklessly or wilfully even what he may call his own. Those who have been trusted with brains and a conscience are bound to use them in managing the rest of their trust. The way we spend money not only shows our character but helps to form it. We are bound, in this as well as in other things, to put duty before self-pleasing, and in the pleasures which we give ourselves, to choose the best, remembering that we are responsible beings always, whatever we may do and wherever we may be. Of course what we owe is not ours: it belongs to our creditors. We are not free to get a name for liberality by spending on our own pleasure, or by giving even to the highest objects, at the cost of those who have trusted us.

Principles are of more worth than pounds, shillings, and pence. Yet, their value is not felt by most men in the same way. When men are liberal with money they do part with something. This is not always the case with those who boast of their liberality in matters of religion. Very often they have no principles to part with. They do not know enough or care enough about religion to mind what others believe or deny. To them there is no such thing as sure truth: they have no firm hold on any doctrine, so they have nothing to lose, and they are quite willing that others should be as poor as themselves in what they judge to be valueless. But their "liberality" commonly fails towards those who know what they believe and why they believe it, and calmly hold fast to the treasure of truth which they prize beyond all else. They act like men who from sin or heedlessness are poor, and who look with jealous hate on those who, by attention and thought and persevering hard work, have gained means of comfort which they guard with care.

Those who are most sure of the truth they hold can show the truest liberality towards others. They can respect others' convictions, even though they know them to be mistaken and wrong. They can recognise truth wherever they find it, even though it be partial, and mixed with much error. They know how much they have still to learn themselves, and so they are patient with the ignorant and unwise. They remember the sacredness and mystery of truth, and so fear lest they be self-confident and irreverent even in defending it.

But God's truth is God's truth. We are not free to make its claim upon us or others seem less than God Himself makes it. We are not free to say what God does not anywhere say, that men may believe Him or not, as their indolence or pride or prejudices lead them. We have no power to give men licence to set their own opinions against God's Word, and to believe as much or as little of it as they please. We are creatures, not God; we are disciples, not the Master. We dare not show liberality in wasting or spoiling the property of a fellow-man. We dare not

be unfaithful with the truths of God. Those truths are not ours, to change or do away with at our will. They are made known to us that we may believe them and be under their holy influence, and may lead others to seek the good which the faith brings to the faithful. The souls of men are God's by creation and redemption. We must not, in the name of liberality, speak of a maimed or partial or mistaken faith as if it were in value equal to the full true faith of the Church of Christ. That is to show ingratitude for what we have been given; it is to encourage in false peace souls that might seek clearer light and fuller grace; it is to show a reckless "liberality" in wasting what is not our own, but a holy trust from God. It is to be cruelly "illiberal" in withholding from others the knowledge of the truths which we have learned.

AMUSEMENTS.

I WAS teaching a large class of children. Our school excursion to the country, a few days before, had been very happy. The weather had been perfect, and all had gone well. I spoke to the children about it. I asked them who had most pleasure in seeing their enjoyment. Every hand was held out. I told them to answer together; all said at once "God." They were surely right; and happy are those who learn thus to think of their Heavenly Father as One who loves to look upon His children's joy, and can enter into their feelings about all that He gives to make them glad. They who know Him as the source of each pleasant thing, and the kind Friend to whose great sympathy nothing that brightens their path is trifling, will surely be most willing to work at weary tasks, and to bear with patient trust life's load of care.

Play is part of the needful education of the young. God has made it needful, and has made them love it. The restlessness that is often blamed in a child should be dealt with

tenderly and guided so as to lead to good. Play helps the growth of body and mind, and shapes the character. A child thinks only of enjoyment when he runs and jumps and plays his active games. He is really bringing out his energies, and working to make his limbs strong and his brain clear. When he laughs in his light-hearted fun he is opening his lungs, and making the flow of blood through all his frame more pure and healthy. He is preparing for the toils of manhood. He learns as really in the sports of the playground as in the tasks of the school-room. He trains eye and hand; he is taught to act with others, to master difficulties, to be good-humoured, and to do his best. And all this helps to make the work of grace less hard. He is not so likely to have gloomy thoughts of God or bitter thoughts of others, or to give way to the sins which most of all harden and degrade.

But the grown-up need play as well as the young. Those who work on with no break to give mind and body due refreshment surely lose tone. Time spent away from work need not be lost time. It may be as really useful for the end sought as any other time. Those who know best how and when to play are the best workers. They do more and do it better. And in their work as well as in what it brings them they are more happy.

Work is to be done not as a hard task, but as honourable duty set us by God, on which we can ask His help and blessing. Our amusements, in like manner, are to be enjoyed as refreshment which God gives. We must be glad to spend our whole life, in all the parts of it, under His eye, and to think of His fatherly interest in us, wherever we are, and whatever we do. So we shall know the secret of working and of playing, so that one shall not spoil the other, and neither shall harm us. We shall do all for the glory of God, and all shall be for our good.

No one who is past childhood enjoys play if he be not a worker. He does not feel his right to it; he has not the true relish for it of the man who knows that he has done his duty as a toiler, and that it is his duty to unbend and be free-hearted for a while. God has so ordered it, that

the man who makes "pleasure" the end and business of life is not happy. He does not live the life for which God made him, and so his life must fail to bring him the good that God means for him. There is a time to laugh; but the "laughter of fools" who are never in earnest tells of disappointment and heaviness. The words we use teach us the right place of play. "Amusement" reminds us that we turn from the studies that claim our attention. "Relaxation" tells of energies commonly braced for earnest work, unbent now and then that they may not lose their firmness. "Recreation" and "refreshment" warn of the waste of power which needs to be renewed, and of the weariness which is a warning to cast off care for a time, that new force and vigour may be gained.

The old rule "Work while you work and play while you play" is full of wisdom. Too much work and too much play are harmful and wrong, and one must not overlap the other. Thoughts of work spoil play, and thoughts of play spoil work. One at a time, and each in its right time.

Those amusements will commonly do us most good which are most unlike our work, and give the greatest change to mind and body. Thus a man who sits all day in an office has not the same needs as the man who works hard with his hands in the open air. Again, social pleasures are as a rule far more healthy and health-giving than those we enjoy alone. Inclination is nearly always a safe guide. Of course reason and common sense and conscience must be used about our pleasures, as well as about our work; but, other things being equal, the pleasures that please us most are those which are best for us, doing best the work which pleasures are meant to do.

Amusement must not hinder but help work; plainly it must be of a kind, and must be so enjoyed, that it will not hinder but help God's work in us for eternity. Nothing can be called pleasure which brings grief or shame after it, or which can only be enjoyed when God is put out of sight. God's blessing is worth more than any passing thrill of delight. Nothing that pleases the flesh or the

mind now ought to tempt us to lose our own peace or self-respect. There are so many ways open for pure enjoyment, that no one has an excuse for seeking those which God forbids, or which make us slow to pray or to look heavenwards. We can be happy, even now, in spite of toil and care, and we can have our times for laying down our burdens. We can be merry and joyful, as becometh Saints. Our merry hearts may rejoice to the glory of God, and our healthy amusements may give us growing power to enter into the fulness of joy in God's presence, where pleasures are for evermore.

UNPREJUDICED.

"I THINK children should not be taught religion. When they grow up they can go, if they like, to some place of worship, and choose for themselves." So said a father, and he added in a tone of self-satisfaction, "I have thought a good deal about these things." He seemed to think that the scraps of knowledge, good or bad, which he had picked up from his halfpenny newspaper, and perhaps his penny one on Sunday, and from men whom he talked with in the taproom, made him quite fit to speak with authority on the most solemn of all subjects. Poor man! he was to be pitied; but far more were his children, so mysteriously put and left in such hands. What hope was there for them, unless God in His great mercy saved them from the folly of their own father?

Many act like this man, though they do not openly avow, even to themselves, what their meaning is. It is taken for granted that religion is not a matter of much importance, and that there is no one faith made known by God which men are bound to learn and to believe. Now, a man ought to be very sure of this before he acts on it, at all events in the case of those who trust him and are in his care. Anyone who has true, wise love for his children will feel bound to do his best for them in this life and for the next.

He must learn, that he may teach; he must get, that he may give; he must go in right paths, that he may bring them safely with him. And, whether he likes or not, he does teach, give, and guide. It is easy to talk about leaving children to themselves. No child is left to itself. Everyone knows the answer given to one who argued against prejudicing a child's mind. "Do not prejudice your garden; sow no seed, leave it to receive freely for itself. The garden will not choose only good and useful things. It will be prejudiced, in spite of you, by weeds and thorns." So a child cannot be kept untaught. If its parents do not teach it care for truth, they teach carelessness. If they do not give it right principles, wrong ones grow up in the neglected soil. If they do not lead it rightly, it will go into ways of danger. A child's brain and heart will not be inactive. Other teachers will step in, if the right ones neglect their duty. Day by day the influence is felt of religion or irreligion. There is ceaseless growth in faith or unbelief, in reverence or irreverence.

How cruel to leave a child without bright, happy thoughts of God, and of the Good Shepherd who gathers the lambs near to His heart, under His strong, kind care! How cruel to forbid or neglect the sowing of the good seed, and to let the tender soil be overgrown with choking weeds, so that the false and evil is beforehand with the true and good! How cruel to let the heart be trodden hard by the cares and troubles of the world, instead of preparing the whole nature to be early fruitful as the garden of the Lord! There is a stern word of Christ's about "offending" His little ones. Surely they are in peril who act so as to leave them uncared for and unprotected against all those evil influences which hinder them from gaining faith and holiness. And if a child do in the end learn truth and find his way to God, how sad that the parents have lost the high privilege which was theirs by right, that they have no part in bringing their child the blessings of knowledge and of good! They have indeed taken the side of falsehood and of sin. For, Christ says, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."

OUR SPIRITUAL FOES.

THERE were evil beings before man fell. Evil did not begin with man: it came to him from another race. How evil first sprang up in God's good creation no one can tell. The history which God gives us does not go so far back as this. We know that man is sinful, that he fell by being tempted, and that the same bad power that led him into sin is at work now to keep him in it. The Bible is quite clear on this matter. The words which tell of the hosts of evil, and of our duty in our danger from them, bear no other meaning. We must indeed be tempted by the weakness and disorder of our own nature, and by the ungodly world around us. But we need, besides, to watch against the malice of unseen spiritual foes, who have lost holiness and hope, and whose aim is to make us outcasts from God like themselves. The thought is very dreadful; so much so that many shrink from believing that there are such beings. Yet the words of Scripture plainly are meant to tell us of persons as real as those whom we see and hear, as real as those holy ones whom God sends forth to help the heirs of His salvation.

Very often what men refuse to believe is no teaching of God, but some mistaken view of what God's teaching is. Many who say they do not believe in an evil spirit have in their minds a being such as the Bible does not even hint at. They think of a sort of bad god, who is everywhere, and knows all things, and can do almost what he will. We are not taught that spirits of evil are always near, or that they can know us except by the outward signs which they observe. We are taught plainly that they have no power to harm us beyond what we yield to them ourselves. There is indeed a mystery in their approach, and in their departure from us for a season. The snares they lay are so cunningly hid, the poison they offer is so mixed with what is wholesome, that it is hard to be safely on the watch. Foes that we can

only trace by what they do or try to do may well be feared. It is well to feel their awfulness, for they must be met in real fight, if we would not be their slaves at last. But none need lose heart in this fight; for greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us. Our foes can vex us, but they cannot force our wills. They can give us pain, but cannot make us sin, without our help. So long as we mean to be true, and humbly try to be so, all our temptation will but leave us stronger, and make us more quietly sure in the peace of God.

It is indeed a solemn thought that we are thus beset. But is there not, after all, great comfort in the thought? Take the world of men as it is, look at all the sin and woe that spoil man's life, think of all the shameful black guilt that forms part of the story of mankind each day. How could we bear to be assured that God and man are the only actors on this scene? Surely it is a great relief and comfort to be able to feel that most of the sin and misery of man's life is the work of beings who are neither man nor God. We can feel that man is not only guilty but a victim, that he can be pitied as a being who has been led astray and wronged by evil ones stronger than himself. Surely the mystery of evil is thus, not indeed made clear, but made less dark in its terror. We need not fall into the despair which must come, if we think of what the world is, and think that only God and man have had to do with making it what it is.

And when evil seems to crowd against us and to rise up within us, when we are almost overwhelmed by what we hate and abhor, is it not a comfort to be able to feel that it is not against ourselves that we struggle, but against a foe separate from us and attacking from without? Would we not often be driven to give up hope, did we look on the sin that grasps us and tries to slay us as a part of our own selves? Would not faith and courage be indeed hard were we forced to count the thoughts and feelings that we find rising up uncalled within us as the native growth of our own spirit. Now we can drive back the tempter with a firm "Get thee hence." We can draw nigh to God, flying to

Him for strength to resist His foe and ours. We need not despair: we can work and fight on in sure hope. While keeping mournfully in mind our past unfaithfulness, and careful lest we betray our trust and give the foe an advantage, we can range ourselves with firm will on God's side; we can fight the good fight, knowing that if we are true "God will bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

RESIST THE DEVIL.

GORDON CUMMING, the great hunter, once found himself face to face with a large lion, which plainly, from his look, thought he had come in the way of a good meal. Cumming was alone, unarmed, and far from any help. A man of less cool courage and steady nerve would have been, without fail, torn to pieces. But he was not one to be daunted easily, or to lose his presence of mind. He took his course at once. He ran at the lion with all his might, as if he had been looking for him, and was only afraid that he would get away. The lion turned tail and ran, leaving his brave pursuer far behind and safe.

This story shows the great power which man has over the lower creatures, if he only knows and trusts his power, and uses it. It also shows the value of a brave heart, and prompt action. But there are other lessons we may learn. Firmness and courage can do more than carry us through such perils as threaten life or limb. We have fierce foes to deal with, who seek our soul's harm or ruin. There are dangers to be met with every day which, if not met well, must bring us more or less of lasting loss. Satan, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, waiting to catch us off our guard. Hardly a day goes by that we are not brought face to face with some dangerous foe that threatens our soul's life. A sudden temptation rises before us, a difficulty stops our way, and we are tempted to lose heart and yield. It seems as if it

were in vain to strive against such odds. The conflict is too hard for us, and our very fear takes away the strength we have.

But this is cowardly and foolish. We never can tell what we can do, till we try; and a brave heart and a good cause can work miracles. When we act promptly and boldly we find many a great foe give way at once before us. When we are met by a difficulty, the right and safe course is to imitate Cumming, and go firmly against it, as if we wished to grapple with it, and were glad of the challenge. When a temptation threatens us, we must not lose heart for a moment, and show fear or doubt. We must crush it down by our firm strength of will; we must drive it away by exerting all the determination and quick power we have. And we are not alone, though we may seem so. It was that in Cumming which was of the image of God that made the lion quail and fly before him. We have a promise of Divine power to help in all time of need. Strong in the sure might of this, we dare not fear anything of earth or hell. We can always gain more and more grace as we need it. The word is given us—"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you;" "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

MIXED MOTIVES.

IT has been said that God cares more for adverbs than for verbs. The meaning is, that He does not ask so much whether a thing is done, as how it is done and why. It is not enough for Him that prayers are said; there is a further question as to the earnestness of him who prays. Duty may be done, but that is not all; God looks to the sense of duty under which the doer acts. Offerings may be laid at God's feet; but He weighs their worth not by their cost among men, but by the love and willing mind of him who brings them. We can understand how this must be the

case. God sees the whole of what comes before Him; He traces it from its source, and knows all its meaning; and He does not need anything from any man. What is done or given with a wrong motive or a bad spirit, or without a true motive and a right spirit, is bad or imperfect. However good it may seem, it is spoiled by what is evil, or it wants that without which it cannot please God. Besides, God calls men to devotion for their own sake, as well as for the sake of the work which He does on earth through means of men. All is part of men's training, meant to bring out in them a true character, by forming habits of doing what is right from right motives. He who acts like a machine grows like one. He who lets his heart and mind be idle ceases to think and feel. He who is guided by low or wrong motives gains a character like his motives. He whose motives are high and pure grows ever more high and pure himself.

We do well to test our hearts by our words, and to test both by our deeds. But this is not enough. If we would judge ourselves so as to know ourselves, we must ask why we act and speak as we do; we must try to find out what has led us to begin any course of conduct, and what has guided us in it. There is no better way to self-knowledge than tracing our words and actions to their source, and noting the manifold influences and motives which have shaped them. So we shall not only understand more easily what we are, but what we ought to be; and we shall be able to set before us a purer, higher aim.

With what is false or mean, or otherwise evil, we must have no peace; lest, however good our work be in itself, the doers of it gain no blessing and only practise sin. But we must not be discouraged, if we find many motives acting along with the highest. These may be right motives, meant by God to have their due place in lightening our burden of duty, and helping us to make our offering with a more glad, ready will. For instance, one who makes a sacrifice of his own ease to help others may find a real joy in seeing the good done and the pleasure of those who are relieved. This need not hinder all being planned and carried out for

the glory of God, and for His sake who came from heaven for our sake. A child may act in a certain way to please father or mother; but this good and holy desire need not lessen the power of the steady aim to please God. Money may be given partly to stir up others by example, and partly from love to some special work or person; still the love of God and of His cause need not therefore be absent, or weak, or inactive. The strongest sense of duty, and the purest, noblest motive may be at work, where what is done is thoroughly enjoyed, and might seem to have enough pleasure in it to attract and to reward the doer. God, in His kindness to His children, helps our infirmities. In the commonest things of daily life He shows this, by making what is good and needful for us pleasant. He does not, for instance, bid us take food merely as a duty, in the same way that we put coals into an engine fire: He gives us appetite and satisfaction. In the most serious matters also, that have to do with our eternal life, He draws us on to good by many cords of love. He does not reprove us when, among the treasures we think of on high which lift our hearts from earth, we count the friends whose love was our great treasure here, and whom we long to meet again.

We need not blame ourselves for what God does not blame. We need not be discouraged if we find much in the nature which God has given us, and in the circumstances with which He has surrounded us, moving us to do right, and making work for God and man full of varied interest. All this does not hinder, but helps the highest of all motives. It cancels or weakens the power of the many things that tempt to sloth and neglect, and leaves us more free to obey the voice of God and conscience. We need have no misgiving, so long as we are careful to keep the highest motives in sight, and to let them hallow all else which guides us. When we are led to fear lest our motives are very mixed and imperfect, we may find comfort by asking: "Would I be willing to try to act as I do, and to give and pray as I do, if the love of God were my only motive? Would I take care to do well, did it cost me pain

instead of giving me pleasure?" The fact that we doubt and watch and test our motives is proof that we feel and own God's claim. God is working in us to will and to do what is right in a right spirit. He who gives the wish will give the power to grow more pure in motive and more true in aim.

I READ MY BIBLE AT HOME.

I HOPE you do. God has given us His holy written Word to guide and cheer us on the path towards heaven. It tells us of God, and of the great and wondrous ways in which He has made Himself known to us as our Father, and our Saviour, and our Sanctifier. It teaches us, too, all our need of Him, our sin, our weakness, our danger, our true woe. It shows the way of life and holiness, and points to the home where rest and peace are being made ready for us. No one who cares for his soul's good can neglect his Bible. No one who feels any wish to learn about God and heaven can be slow to seek for knowledge in that holy Book.

But there are many ways of reading the Bible, and many who read are none the better for all the time they spend. Some read only for the sake of reading, with no prayer for light from God, no wish to learn how to live. Some read to find support for their own opinions. Some to get arguments to use in ungodly disputes. Some make the reading of the Bible an excuse to their own consciences, and to God, for leaving out other duties as plain and binding. A very common answer to warnings against neglect of public worship is, "I read my Bible at home." Now, in the first place, those who make this plea very often do not read their Bibles at home. If they do, they read to very little purpose, if they find anything in the Bible telling them that this will make up for the want of the public means of grace. Reading the Bible does us

good by leading us to know and love God more, and to draw near to Him for His grace in all the ways which He provides. It is a help to religion, it is not religion. The Bible tells us too, in the very plainest way, the value and importance of the means of grace—of the Holy Sacraments, of public worship, of the open acknowledgment of duty to God which we make when we honour Him before our fellow-men. So if we neglect these duties, and make little of these privileges, we show that we disobey the teaching of the Bible, and read it in vain.

If God has provided means of grace, means by which we can be sure of gaining His help, if we wish for it and try devoutly to win it, we dare not be at rest, unless we use them all. We have no right to think we can do without any one. We cannot be very earnest, if we deny our souls even what seems to us least needful. We cannot tell how full of unknown value it may be. Perhaps it may be meant to bring us what we need most. If we "forsake the assembling of ourselves together," and forget Christ's promise of being in the midst where two or three are gathered together in His name, we must not wonder if, in the last day, we are found wanting.

Who can tell how all means of grace may be bound together, so that the neglect of one may spoil the power of all the rest? When God asks souls why they lack the grace which public worship was meant to give, it will not do to answer, "I did not think it needful; I read my Bible at home."

GOD SEES: GOD HEARS.

GOD teaches us to pray, and He teaches us to live. He hears all prayers, just as He sees all men. But as He does not look on all lives with favour, so He does not hear all prayers so as to give a blessing in return. God sees and hears all things always. He does not turn from

us when we wish to be hidden, and turn towards us when we wish to be seen. He looks on the life along with the prayer, and the prayer along with the life. They must agree one with the other. We must "seek" by our own effort, as well as "pray" for God's help. Our will should aim in one direction, whether we work or pray.

What is holiness of life but acting according to the will of God? What is prayer for spiritual good but an act by which we join our will with God's will, and seek to be wholly one with Him, so that His help may be with us while we try to do and to become what He wills. Each true effort after good is made under His inspiration. Each true prayer is guided by the Holy Spirit, who prays in us. When we pray, we do not protest against what God does, or think to dictate to Him, as if we were wiser or more kind than He, or knew best what is good for us. We ever guard ourselves by praying that His will may be done in us and by us; and we do not pray that we may be saved the trouble of doing the part which God gives us for our own good. If we ask for grace and knowledge, our prayer is in vain, unless we seek to have and to gain grace in the ways which God offers, and ask His blessing on our efforts. If we pray for others, we bind ourselves to give to them and to work for them, as we are made able.

God joins us with Him. He gives our labour a place in working out His plans, and He gives our prayers a place. Who will dare to say that a prayer which God inspires may not have as real a power as a word or deed inspired by the same God? In the world of grace we know the might of prayer, how God uses it to work out His will, so binding man closely to Him. The world of nature is not free from the hold and control of Him who made it and gave it laws. Those laws work on in a true, sure, regular way, which enables us to count upon them, and so to act with foresight, turning them to use. Where the same causes are, they lead to like effect. We can change the way in which causes work together, and bring in new causes. For instance, by planting and draining we can change the climate of a country, leaving the laws of nature

still true in their working. We can make the lightning do our bidding. Certainly the living God can do at least what man can do. He can, when we make our requests known to Him, give our prayers a place among the means He uses. He can bring His will, which is one with the prayer that He guides us to pray, into the movement of the machine, all the parts and powers of which He knows as its Maker. So He can make what comes to pass unlike what it would be if His living will did not alter the arrangement of the causes at work.

Only those who try to live as God wills, can hope that God is with them in their prayers. Only those who love to think that God watches over and guides their lives, can have the peace of those who are sure that God inspires and hears their prayers.

DETRACTION.

A MAN'S character is his property, quite as much as his house, or his field, or his machinery, or his money in the bank. With many it is worth all else; for on it depends his livelihood—his power of earning and of doing well in the world. To many it is the dearest of possessions; for on it depends the good-will and trust of friends whom they treasure. To steal a man's good name, or to take from it any part of what makes it good, is to rob him of that which without a good name he cannot keep, or to hold from him that which without a good name he cannot get. To be careless about a neighbour's character is, morally, at least as wicked as to be careless about his money. We all feel strongly where our own credit is in question, but where others are concerned we are apt to be very heartless and heedless, if not wilfully cruel and dishonest. Most men are a little careful about making open charges against others. They are wisely afraid of the law of libel, and in their crafty cowardice they guard against

being brought face to face with the person wronged. But a house may be undermined, or taken down brick by brick, so as to fall to ruin just as surely as if it were battered by cannon. So, little words, and looks, a speaking silence, or hints and questions which don't say much but mean a great deal, may break down a character and blight a life with loneliness and despair.

Some people show a strange skill against those whom they dislike. They cannot deny their good points, and they do not; they speak of them openly, they enlarge upon them with what sounds like generous admiration. This is but to cover, not to hide, the venomous word which they let drop, as if by chance, or which they say it is their unwilling duty to speak. It may be that this word is protested against or pleaded against by the person to whom it is spoken, as mistaken or unfair. Then there is a half withdrawal of it, an expression of regret that it was spoken; and, at the same time, a look, a tone, or a few more words which have the effect of sinking the mischief deeper, and fastening it to the mind. The end is gained; confidence is disturbed, there is left an uneasy suspicion which will watch for signs of what has been hinted at. The mind will be prepared to take in new hints, and to fancy that it finds proof. The cunning slanderer may be plainly seen through in the shame of his meanness and malice; but he has done his work. How many lives have been spoiled of joy and usefulness by the hateful, who hate those who are better than themselves, and who vent their hate with smiling faces and honeyed words! Well does the wily accuser of the brethren train in his school. Cleverly does he bring from hell that with which detracting tongues are set on fire.

The envy which is the chief motive for detraction is in many rebellion against God's dealings. They dare to grudge others what tells of God's favour. They cannot bear to see them able to do more for God than they, and to do it better. They would really rather that God's work were left undone than it should be done by their rivals; they try to lower them in men's eyes; they often

succeed; they often, by the temptation with which they provoke them, drive them to sin and loss of God's blessing. Those who act in this way seldom have any thought of what they do. Were their sin put in plain words, and laid to anyone else's charge, they would be as full of righteous indignation as David was when he heard Nathan's story.

If we have any love for God, and zeal for His cause, we must be glad of any powers that any have, and any blessing that they win. If we have that charity which "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in [with] the truth," we must love to dwell not on the evil which we see, or think we see, in others, but on what shows the working of God's grace. The best have faults; all of us can find our own if we try. Surely it is happier to think well of those whom we meet in our daily path, and to thank God for that in them which we can make use of to cheer our lives. If we fear God, we must fear lest we curse those whom He blesses, and offend the little ones whom He leads onward with gentle care: we must take heed lest we hinder the Church's cause, while taking the part of champions of truth. If others do wrong, that is no reason why we should sin by want of charity. Proving them bad does not make us good in the sight of God. Nothing will make us more hateful and contemptible in the sight of men than the habit of detraction.

FOR SELF OR GOD.

ST. PAUL rejoiced that Christ was preached, though he deplored and condemned the low and evil motives that led some to preach Him. Envy against man, not love towards God, made them zealous in work. God overruled their sin, and used them to spread the truth of Christ. He knew that what they did was not done for Him, so He gave them no blessing. The Pharisees, who prayed and

fasted and gave alms to be seen of men, were seen of men. They had the reward they sought; they had none from heaven.

Those who know themselves know how hard it is to be quite true, to act for God's eye, to speak for God's ear, and to do His will simply because it is His will. The most faithful sometimes find self threatening to spoil everything. They are filled with shame and fear when they test the purity of what they offer to God. They have to watch and pray earnestly, or else thoughts of man's judgment and their own glory will take the place of true zeal for God. The highest motive may indeed live and act with others which are good and pure; but there are motives which are evil and mean in themselves, or which become so when given undue power. In choosing and in doing work, self often makes its claim so loudly, that God can scarcely get a hearing. The question is apt to be, not how far men can serve the cause for which they profess zeal, but how far the cause can be made to serve them by bringing them gain or praise. Men commonly gain what they seek, not what they say they seek or think that they seek, but what is their real aim. There ought to be no doubt on this point in the mind of anyone who is in earnest. The question is one worth asking firmly, and settling on sure grounds. There seems to be very dark, hard sin in using God's name to exalt our own, and in seeking praise for self while we profess to labour for God's glory.

We are not true workers for God, nay, we are not true followers of Christ at all, unless we are willing to deny self by being ready to forego the praise of men. We work as members of a body, and God's is all the strength by which we work. So that God's will is done, no matter who is called to do it; that we should leave to God. If we might be tempted to vanity or selfishness by being put forward, we should be thankful to be left in the background, and kept humble. If another can do the work better than we can, we should be glad to yield, and so prove that we care for the cause more than for our own glory. If we do what

we are called to do with our best skill and care, God knows all about it; whether men praise us or not need give us no thought. Our great aim always should be to add to what is done in God's cause; to do something which would not be done without us, to fill some empty place. Plenty of workers can be found for each pleasant, easy post, where worldly gain and man's praise wait for the worker. He who fills such a place keeps out from it some one else who could do all he does quite as well, or better. We guard against low selfish aims, and make sure of being indeed of use, by going where no one else wants to go, and doing what no one else wants to do. If we choose the lowest place, with the single aim of doing good, we provoke no envy in others, or vanity in ourselves. We make common work great by the purity of the motive with which we do it. We run no risk of spoiling what we are unequal to, and being put down with shame. We keep from the temptation to display self and to look down on others. We train ourselves for what higher trust God may in His own time call us to fulfil.

FORMS.

WHATEVER is said or done must be said or done somehow. There are right ways and wrong ways of saying and doing everything. There are ways which are better than others, though not the best. It is well that our lives, in all the little things that make them up, should be as right as possible. Much of our pleasantness and usefulness depends upon our manner with those whom we meet in the intercourse of daily life. The forms to which the customs of society have given almost the force of law are useful. No one who is wise or thoughtful will make light of them. They express feelings of kindliness and courtesy; they save people from wondering and puzzling about what is right to do and how to do it, and from awkwardly show-

ing their own peculiarities. The world has its rules, and men only have to learn them and be guided by them, so as to avoid being offensive or ridiculous. And these forms keep men at a proper distance from one another. They are a witness to man's claim to honour and consideration from his fellow-man. They are a protest against roughness or familiarity. It is indeed a question how far the freedom of intercourse that is allowed now is not a falling off from the more reserved and dignified and formal manners of our ancestors. It is easy to say that there was much in the courtliness of old days that was mere outside show; but all these forms reminded those who used them of what they were supposed to feel, and were bound to feel, whether they did or not. They were an acknowledgment of the right to courtesy of those whom they treated with the outward signs of it. "Familiarity breeds contempt," and inward respect can hardly long survive when it does not show itself in this manner. Where there is only a hollow form, it, at all events, helps to keep the world decent, and the coarseness of the vulgar is more or less held in check.

The Church has her forms and ceremonies as well as the world, and it is not hard to see how needful they are. Who are we, that we should take upon ourselves to draw nigh to the King of kings? Yet He bids us come into His courts, and give Him honour, and speak our wants into His ear. How are we to do this? In what way and manner are we to put ourselves before Him? We know not till He tells us. God is not as one of us, and we wait for Him to teach us how to come aright. All agree that the mind must be fixed in earnest thought, and that the spirit must bow in lowly reverence. There must be the feeling of unworthiness, and at the same time a true faith and hope in the love and goodness of the Holy One. About this there is no question. But when we worship, we cannot do so, as if our spirits parted from our bodies, and left them outside the presence-chamber. Our bodies are before God as well as our spirits. Surely it is most important that the posture and movements of the body should be fitting. They should be a true

expression of the posture and movements of the spirit. They should, even in our private communion with God, be such as shall not hinder or contradict, but help the inward devotion. But our worship is not a secret thing between God and ourselves; it is not lonely and selfish. We are bound to show what we feel towards God, and to give Him outward homage. And it is our duty to join with others in prayer and praise, in a way to help and encourage their devotion.

Christ came in outward form. He spake in the form of words. His Sacraments are given through outward means and signs. We are forms; the language in which we think and speak is a form. The choice is not between forms and no forms, but between what is seemly and helpful, and what is neither. For example, when we pray, our bodies must be in some position. The man who, while he begs for mercy as a miserable sinner, lolls at his ease in a cushioned seat, uses a form as really as the man who, kneeling upon his knees, with bowed head, lets the posture of his body correspond in some degree with the lowly desire which his words express.

God who made us knows us, and He deals with us as we are. He always was, is now, and ever shall be, a Spirit. He never could welcome any worship but that which is in spirit and in truth. So we understand how all the careful directions which He gave about the manner of His people's approaches to Him in old time were not to hinder, but to help spiritual worship. And what we can learn of the worship in heaven teaches us that there is no heedless or informal manner among the holy ones before the throne; that the pure and glorified spirits who look upon the face of God use outward forms and much ceremony when they adore.

When we have a rule, and know what forms to use, then we are not perplexed by questions as to how we ought to act; our thoughts and hearts are free for the work of devotion. True it is that men may and do become formal; what is outward remaining when the inner life has gone, or words and actions telling of more than as yet the mind

thinks or the heart feels. But where the outward forms are seemly and fitting they are a constant reproof and warning of what is wanting. It is hard for the conscience not to ask where that is, the outward signs of which appear. On the other hand, it is hard for reverence and devotion to survive long, where there is nothing in the outward manner which tells that they live, and is the expression of their life.

PHILANTHROPY.

THOSE who are busy in what are called good works are not always "philanthropists" in the true meaning of the word. A man who is well known as a busy doer and a large giver may be, all the while, a lover of but one man, and that himself. There may be no high principle in what he does; there may be a selfish aim in every gift. There may be no love for the persons helped, no real care for their real good. People deceive themselves in such matters, and the world is easily dazzled. The gift or the work is great; the world takes for granted the generosity of the giver or the doer, and applauds him. He forgets the true reasons that have guided him, and believes the pleasant flattery that his acts are a sign of the motives for which he is given credit.

Some bargain in all they do. If they spend either time or money on others, it is with a clear view of getting a return that will repay them. They scheme coldly, not how they may do most good to their neighbours, but how they may do the best for themselves. For their own profit in the end they are ready to run risks and to toil long and hard. They make full use of all their powers and means with a keen business spirit. If "philanthropy" seems a good opening for capital, they are quite willing to have their shrewdness for self called by that name.

Some do not calculate in this far-seeing way for their own

worldly gain, who yet act simply to relieve themselves. To look on pain pains them; to hear of sorrow spoils their peace and makes them sad. They have strong imaginations, and the world's miseries are very real to them. They would like to keep them out of sight or forget them; but they cannot. They would like to go on in their own easy, pleasant way of life; but these dismal spectres haunt them. So they try to get rid of them for their own comfort. They have no warm feeling for the miserable, but they cannot bear to see or think of miseries; and they are willing to pay or work that they may be put out of sight or made less revolting.

Others love power, and like to show it. The needy and the sad can be readily used for the ends of pride. A man with no love or kindness in him may feel a great joy in looking down on those who look up to him for gifts, and in receiving the homage of those who are dependent on his bounty.

Again, others take up a cause merely as an outlet for restless energies which want work. They choose it by chance or fancy, not from the strength of its claim, or on any ground of duty. The cause may be a very good one, or it may have nothing in it to arouse enthusiasm. This does not matter. They are enthusiastic about it. They have honoured it by taking it up. They plead and work for it as if it were the only cause worth caring for. Often, in their zeal, they neglect higher and more pressing work, and seem to have no thought left for duties that have first claim on all. It is made plain that in their fussy, noisy work they act from no large-hearted love, but only set their natural restlessness in a certain groove.

It is a good thing for the world that it is not wholly dependent on work done from good, unselfish motives. Were it so, much work would be left undone which helps to make the world bright. It is well that God can overrule even man's selfishness and pride and egotism, and make them serve the common good instead of doing harm. Those who give and work with low aims do not gain the high reward which God has for the true; but it is better

that, with whatever motive, they should help others rather than hurt them; and the prayers of the poor and sorrowful may win for them the blessing of a holier aim.

Christian love is not like the philanthropy of the world. It comes from God; it acknowledges the brotherhood of men, and the union of Christ's members in one Body. He who has it is kind to the unthankful and unholy. He does good, seeking for nothing again, knowing that he is in the world to spread the influence of the Divine love which has blessed himself. He looks on the miseries of men as the works of evil, so he battles not only with them but with their cause. In all he does he seeks to work for God and with God. When he speaks words of comfort or counsel, it is with the reverent and yet trustful feeling of one who would be as the voice of Christ to those for whom Christ died. When he helps the sick or needy, it is with the thought that he is as the hand of Christ, to whom he would have all glory given. And in all who suffer he sees the members of Christ, who suffers with His own, and who will say in the end, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren ye did it unto Me."

PATIENCE.

THE patient win sympathy and honour. We feel for them as we do not for those who seem to have so much pity for themselves that none is needed from others. We are drawn with a sort of reverence to one who stands firm against adversity, or can lie down on his cross and bear the pain of it calmly. We own the dignity and power shown in quiet silence under wrong, and in self-restraint which will not complain. Who has not felt his own rising impatience shamed down by the meek submission, or the strong, brave endurance of others? Who has not found inspiration in it?

There are many kinds of patience; and all are not from

the same source. All are not signs of grace, or means of growing in grace. All are not indeed Christian. The Indian warrior can bear, without flinching, the worst tortures. Pride and hatred of the foes who torment him brace his resolution. He will show no sign of weakness. He will not let his foes see that he cares for what they do. Some men seem patient when, in fact, they have no deep feeling of trials which would be agony to more refined and tender natures. Some, again, make up their minds to bear what they cannot help, hardening themselves in sullen despair. There are others who do feel keenly all that tries body and spirit, and are yet brave and cheerful. Even though they feel alone and unhelped, and they know not the meaning of life's sorrows, they brace themselves to endure. They are too unselfish and modest to proclaim their troubles and cast a needlessly dark shade upon the lives around them. We honour these, and wonder at the strength they show, even while they are being overpowered and overwhelmed.

But the patience of a Christian is a stronger thing. He who has it is not overpowered or overwhelmed. Sorrow is not less real to him or pain less painful. But to his faith they are something more than pain and sorrow. He knows that he is in the hands of God, and that nothing comes to pass which has not in it some end that is wise and good. He does not merely bow to the stroke that falls, or let the load be laid on him. His patience is an active power. He uses all right means to gain relief and help. What cannot be cured he does more than firmly endure. He asks how it may be turned to use, and made more than a trouble, even a means of greater good. He tries to learn God's purpose, and to unite himself with the Divine will, so that no part of God's design for him may fail through his fault.

It has been said that those who live pure and honest lives and have no hope of a life beyond this, are nobler in their virtue than those who are helped by the warnings and promises of religion. And so it might be urged that the patience of a Christian, to whom faith opens out a world unseen and eternal, shows less force and grandeur than that

of one who yields to have his only life darkened and destroyed. But the hope of good to be gained as the end of a life of holiness is not the only or the greatest motive that inspires a Christian's holy life: and there is far more than the hope of rest and recompence that accounts for his patience in sorrow.

He thinks of his trials as signs of his share in that sin which brought woe and death to man. He calls to mind his own sins. He dwells in thought on the woes which man's sin brought on Christ. What he feels in his own mind and body helps him to imagine what Christ must have borne. He counts up all that has made his life bright, and how long the good gifts of which he mourns the loss were spared to him. So his mournings are checked; he feels how much cause he has had for thankfulness. Faith in God's love is made sure and strong by thoughts of God's care of him in many ways, and above all of the cost of his redemption. God's love is made known and brought home to him as a power of grace enabling him to love God. For His sake he will endure. And faith gives him hope. He gains in his trial experience of the Divine faithfulness which upholds and cheers him: and he is sure that in God's own time and way he shall know how God's dealings with him work to do him good. And so he asks to learn what God's will is; and he does not merely leave himself unresisting in the hands that he trusts. He takes up the cross, as if he had power to put it from him. He chooses the way of God's will, whatever it may be, however against his natural desires. If the cup may not pass except he drink it, he is ready to lift it to his own lips, that God's will for him and in him and by him may be done.

DO I LOVE CHRIST?

IT is a question to which many find no sure answer come. They are glad and thankful that Christ has lived and died. All their hope is in the work that He has done and is doing. But they fear that this is not enough. They long to feel Him near, to love Him, as they believe He loves them. They are not content only to know about Him or His work, they wish to be brought into personal nearness to Himself, and to love Him for what He is. This, of course, is quite right. Christ does not ask us only to prize His gifts or to care for being saved. He says, "Love Me;" "Give Me thine heart."

But many fall into a sad mistake, which checks the growth of their religion, and robs it of its joy and brightness. They search in their hearts for this love of Christ, and failing to find it, or finding it mixed up with other things, they lose heart. Sometimes they give up their religion, as if it were all unreal: sometimes they try to gain what is felt wanting, in ways of their own, instead of in the path of simple trustful obedience to God's guiding.

We cannot love Christ till we know Him. We know Him as He shows Himself to us. This knowledge must be gained by degrees, till we know and love Him fully. The longing to love Him shows that He has begun to make Himself known, and is a pledge that He wills to go on in His loving work.

What must we do, then? How are we to yield to His grace? How are we to prove our desire to know and love Him? How are we to put ourselves in the way of gaining the power to do so? What does Christ say?

"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him."

Here is plain advice, with full, clear promise. Christ

speaks, who loves all, and wishes to love all with the love which blesses those who love Him and do His will. Christ speaks, who wishes all to know Him and to love Him as One who is known. He seems to say this, "When I have put into your heart the wish to love Me, strive to gain what you long for in this way. See that you have My commandments, and keep them; that you learn what My will is, and do it. Do what you do to please Me, because I wish it done. Do not be cast down, though in your heart you find it hard to trace a deep feeling of love. Persevere in faith. I own what you do as the effort of love. I say of you, 'He it is that loveth Me.' While you are listening for My voice and obeying My will, you draw near to Me, and learn to know Me. I will give you more of the love which I have for those that love Me. As it is good for you, I will make you feel it bless and gladden you. I will 'manifest Myself unto you,' and show you more what I am, that you may taste more fully of the joy of loving Me."

Christ says, again, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Love to Him inspires obedience, and obedience is the test of love. It is possible to say "Lord, Lord," with much feeling, and yet to fail in doing what Christ says. Emotion does not prove devotion. We are bidden to love "with all the heart and soul and mind and strength." The "heart" means the will; with this the "mind" is fixed on Him who claims love, and the "strength" of the whole being is devoted to His service. The affections of the "soul" are meant to make self-denial easy and obedience a delight. They are part of our being, and God claims them. They can find rest in Him who alone is their sufficient object. We give them to Him when we own His right, and seek to be "known of Him," who makes Himself known to us in many ways of love. Thus He wins our personal affection, as our human friends grow dear. The feeling gains strength, we know not how, that He loves us and that we love Him. We can scarce use words about it, but it gives us a rest and a joy of which we are quite sure.

ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK.

THOSE who have much to do, and who wish to do it, try to work on a plan. Out of all that it would be well to do each day, they choose what seems the most important, and they aim to go from one thing to another till all are done. It is right to have a course marked out, and to work with what order one can. Life is very much a drift and a failure where time and place are not cared for. But plans, however well formed, can seldom be carried out fully. Something nearly always breaks in, which must be attended to, and often the day seems gone almost in vain, spent upon matters which have little or nothing to do with what has been in the mind when the day began. We are apt to lose heart, and to feel as if there were no use trying to be orderly, and life were wasted away on trifles.

But it is not our own work that we do; we are not our own masters; and our own judgment and will are not to be our guides. We must plan our best, and do our best to carry out our plans under the Divine light and blessing. But God knows where we are wanted, and His providence settles what we are to spend our time and strength upon. We do not see the end of anything to which we are called. The least duty which claims us, and takes us out of the path of our own chosen way, may lead to some far greater good than could have come from our being let go on undisturbed. We are not able to see God's great scheme, or to tell how all things are made to fit into their places in working that out to its perfection. Our part is to do what is before us with patience and faith, leaving the result in the hands of Him whose servants we are. All is in the day's work.

The same thought helps us in our trials. Men thwart us and wrong us and vex us in all sorts of ways. Our own weakness casts us down; our own sinfulness shames

us, as we find out its strength while fighting with it. All this bearing of the cross, all this toil and war, so hard, and so full of what humbles us, is part of what God gives us to meet and go through for His sake and ours. It is all in the day's work. We need not flag in zeal or fail in hope, or think how much better we should go on, were some things changed in our lives. God knows best. It may be that much of what we have to do and bear comes on us from our past sin or folly; it is needed to set us right, so that we may regain by earnest use of God's grace the state from which our sin and folly cast us down. Our hardships send us to the one true comfort. The failings and the peculiarities of our friends train us in that Christian love which spreads a veil over faults, covering them gently. That in our yoke and cross which galls and frets us calls out the meekness and quietness of spirit which Christ gives.

We are led to draw into us and to put forth the strength and the love of Christ. All is in the day's work. Our Master sets it out for us. In the doing of it all we do His holy will and grow to be what He plans we should become. And while we yield to His leading and forming hand, we take the shape which is in the mind of Him who fashions us for His holy and eternal uses. All has to do with His work upon us which goes on day by day. The least pressure of that hand is meant to leave its mark. A statue comes forth at last in delicate and refined beauty, as the result, not of a few strokes of the sculptor's chisel, but of numberless touches, each of which by itself has seemed to make no change.

HUMILITY.

MEN who talk most humbly are not always humble. Men may behave in a humble manner whose hearts are full of pride. The truly humble are often judged

wrongly: for they make no display; they have their humility, like their other virtues, not for show, but for use.

The varieties of false humility are worth noting as a help to self-examination. Many persons speak lowly words of themselves, and make little of their powers and deeds, in order to attract notice to themselves and their powers. They find this a sure way to win flattery, and to lead their friends to tell them that they do themselves injustice. They thus get credit, not only for those things which they disown, but for the virtue of humility as well. Their friends are more ready to think of them, what, in their modesty, they seem unwilling to think of themselves. Anyone who wishes to test their sincerity can do so by assenting to what they say as true and just. The lowly manner will change, and the lowly words will stop, when they find that their poor opinion of their merits is shared by others.

Some people, again, speak humbly, and make little of their powers, that they may not be called to work which would cost pains and toil. They are slothful, and this is the one secret of their professions of humility. Or, perhaps, they are vain and sensitive about what is said of them, and wish to be thought more highly of than they might be, were they better known. So they hold back from plain, clear calls of duty, on the plea of unfitness, when in truth they only fear lest they should not acquit themselves with credit. Sometimes men speak modestly, and as if with shame of what they do, in order to give the impression that it is not nearly as good as they can do, however it may look to the eyes of others who have a less high standard.

It is no proof of humility to display knowledge of the obvious fact that man is sinful and can do nothing without God. Men may, and do boast, even of their sins, thanking God that they are not as other men are who have not learned to know themselves, and who are less helped by grace. It is not humility to deny the possession of God's gifts to mind and soul, any more than of

money. If a man has ten thousand pounds, he ought not, in fancied lowliness, to say that he has only five. So a man may know well that God has entrusted him with powers of mind, or advantages of education. This is a matter of fact, and without any vaunting of himself he can take the fact into account in his life. To deny it is to be insincere; nay more, it is to be unthankful to God, who has made him what he is, and given him what he has. What calls itself modesty, again, may be only a thinly veiled unbelief in God, who is ready to help with His grace those whom He calls to His work.

The truly humble man is one who knows himself, and lives in the presence of God. Before the Almighty and All Holy he feels his highest knowledge ignorance, his wisdom foolishness, his goodness full of shortcoming. He does not measure himself by man's standard, but by God's. He sees what he ought to be and might be, did he use in full the means and helps at hand. He bows to God's will in giving him his place and his work and his powers. He does his best, looking for Divine help, and careful only for the approval of his own conscience and of God. He does not aim to draw men's eyes upon him; he does not speak much of self, because he does not think much of self. His words and acts are guileless and natural. He never looks down on others with scorn, because he is ever looking up to God, who is so far above him. He is ready to be, like his Master, as one that serveth; but does it all as a matter of course, not saying or making others feel that he is condescending. True humility stirs to faith in God, who can and who will supply what man wants, when he looks up to Him in his felt need and weakness. It rouses to hope of better things and a higher, purer state: for He who gives the hunger and thirst and the holy ambition will not fail to satisfy. The humble man is not content with what he knows he is; he counts not himself to have attained, but presses forward, using diligently all the means within his reach. Humility, again, shows itself in love. He who indeed loves God with a right love offers his heart with a reverence and

a godly fear, as one who feels unworthy, and remembers how far above him is the God who, in loving kindness, asks for his love. And humility is part of all the forms of that charity without which man is nothing.

He who humbleth himself shall be exalted; not those who are humbled, for when cast down to shame man may only become, like Satan, more proudly a rebel. Those alone have the promise who acknowledge the mighty hand of a God of love, and humble themselves under it in faith, yielding to His ruling, forming will, that He may in His own way and in His own due time lift them up to that state for which the discipline of life prepares.

CANDOUR.

IT is pleasant to meet the eye of a true friend, and to know that his words say what is in his mind and heart—simply what he means. It is pleasant to feel that if he says what he knows will be unwelcome, he forces himself in his kindness to be faithful for our sake, and for the love he bears. There are few friends but those whom we have known in the days of free, open-hearted youth, who will take the trouble and run the risk of being quite candid. Few friendships will stand the test, but those which have grown to be part of our life, so that without them we are not ourselves. Nothing is a more real proof of the truth and worth of a friend's friendship than the candour which comes from jealous care that we should do and be right. We may feel sore for a while, and be wounded even by his quietly spoken words; but we can trust one who does not flatter: we can feel that he means all he says when his words are pleasant. Wounds pain us, though they come from friends; but all wounds are not signs of friendliness. Some are given in malice, or carelessness, or want of feeling, or from the mere pleasure of finding fault.

There are people in the world who pride themselves upon being straightforward, and calling things by their right names, from whom very few escape unhurt. If there are two ways of doing anything, they choose the roughest. If one word is harder than another, that is the word which they like to use. If they stir up strife, and leave hearts sore and tender feelings torn, they say they are no hypocrites, that they must speak out at all costs, and show what they mean, no matter what comes of it. Such men are feared; but no one loves or likes them. They get their own way very much, simply because gentler people will not meet them on their own ground, and so step aside to let them pass. Sometimes they find the way not quite smooth; for everyone is not able to bear such roughness long. The check does them no good; for they count themselves among the sufferers for truth. And when they meet with bad manners in others, they call them by the right name, not seeing that they are only a copy of their own bad manners, which they call candour. These people are an anxiety and a nuisance. It is not pleasant to have one's temper and courtesy put to a ceaseless test; nor is it pleasant to be a witness while others are treated rudely. Life would indeed hardly be worth living, were there many more of these "candid" people in the world to spoil its peace and pleasantness.

No one ought of course to be false or insincere. That goes without saying. But there is something else quite as sure. It is not the business of everybody to tell everybody his faults; and those whom duty calls to point out faults are also bound in duty to speak and act so as not to give needless pain. We are not bound to say out to each friend or acquaintance all that we think of him. We are not bound to fix on each the brand of a name by which it seems just to us that he should be called. Even the feelings of a wrong-doer should be respected. Modesty and self-respect and fear of God will check words that may express too hasty judgment. Love of our neighbour and care for his good, must make us fear lest we

stir up evil within him, and leave him more hard. Our thoughts are much hidden from one another. It is well that this is so, and we are not meant to lay bare all our mind without reserve. We are bound to hold our thoughts in check, much more our tongues and our outward manner. We may change our judgment after the word has passed our lips or the rough deed has been done. What we think to be a bare plain statement of fact may prove that we do not know the case, or else that we are full of malice and ill-will. A gentleman or gentlewoman will be true, and will be gentle still. Those who respect themselves will be careful not to fail in manner towards others. They will move among their neighbours with delicacy and taste. They will be candid; but not rude. They will act straightforwardly; but will not be meddlesome. Christ drove the buyers and sellers from the Temple, and used stern words to the hypocrites; but we are not Christ, nor in His place. We do not read hearts, as He could; nor can we speak as those who are without sin.

HYPOCRISY.

A HYPOCRITE is an actor. This is the meaning of the word. A hypocrite puts on the outward look, and plays the part of some one else; he does not appear in his true character. He speaks, he moves, not as the man he is, but as the man he tries to seem like. On the stage of a theatre the same man may act as a king, or a rich noble, or a soldier. A rogue may win applause as the champion of truth and virtue. The actor aims not to become, but to seem the character which he is paid to perform. He tries to hide himself, and to make those before whom he acts think of him only in his borrowed character. So with the hypocrite. It pays him in some way to be thought what he is not. He does not care to

be brave, or true, or devout, but he wishes to get the credit of being one or all of these, and he acts with a view to that credit. He does not try to change his thoughts and feelings that they may show naturally in the expression of his face; he puts on a mask. He does not look to his heart, that out of the abundance of it his mouth may speak what is good and pure, and his life may be rightly guided. He spends his efforts in imitating the words and ways of those whose hearts are right. Of course, as his acting becomes more perfect, he is less likely ever to become what he pretends to be. There is falseness in the aim to be thought true while he is untrue; there is cowardice in hiding his want of courage under a show of courage; it is daring profanity to put on the action or manner of devotion, with a view not of giving rightful honour to God, but of winning undeserved honour from men.

Christ had gentleness and pleading words for sinners whom men counted lowest. He had only hard, stern warnings for the hypocrites. His woes against them were dreadful in plainness. He spoke of a portion with the hypocrites as the worst doom men could fear. The hypocrite was one whom he saw going on towards ruin in calm self-deceit, from which a loud call could alone startle him. Or he was daring and hard in sin, well aware of the rights of God, and the worth of holiness; but using God's name, and putting on the manner of the godly to serve his own pride or worldliness.

There are hypocrites of many sorts. Some are bolder and more past hope than others. All men need to watch and prove themselves with care, lest some form of this dark and cunning sin spoil their religion and bring them to shame.

Many, with no thought of what they do, act a part before themselves. Many deceive their own hearts, in spite of misgivings which now and then it is hard to silence. David was no hypocrite, in the full meaning of the name. Sin had dulled his power of feeling sin. The prayers he said during those evil days were not all known or meant

as mockery. He believed that he had the highminded indignation against sin which he expressed to Nathan. The Pharisees, also, did not know how hollow their religion had grown to be. The life had left it by degrees, and they had formed the habit of speaking and acting in certain ways, so that they went on, blinded to the truth that a new motive which had not to do with God had taken the place of devotion, and that all they did was to be seen of men. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and did not find out their true selves under the mask and the manner which hid them.

Some are bolder than these. They have no fear of their own conscience, and they silence it when it speaks. They have no fear of God, or care for His judgment on them. They live for man's applause, and they part readily with self-respect and with God's favour that they may win it. To reach some worldly end they are ready to act whatever part may serve them best. They make long prayers, that they may betray those who are led to trust them. They profess love to God, that they may hide their love of gain: they talk of heaven, that they may get men's help in the things of this life. They give work and money to the cause of God, in order to make friends of those who love God, and with a purely worldly purpose.

What can be said of those who "dissemble with God," who make professions to Him which they do not mean, and act before Him as if they sought His good gifts of grace, while they have no thought of ruling their lives according to His will. There are many who need to be reminded that God is not mocked, that He traces words to their source, that He weighs the worth of all that men do when they come before Him and call upon His Name. Men who are quite without earnestness or will to live for God, yet would feel unhappy if they did not go through the form of "saying their prayers" or being present at public worship. It is as if they thought that this outward show of remembering God would satisfy

Him as it quiets their own conscience, as if it deceived Him no less than themselves.

The name hypocrite is often given where it is undeserved. A man may be very inconsistent and yet be in no sense a hypocrite. St. Peter might have seemed one when his acts were so unlike what he had professed; but when he said that he would gladly die with his Master, he meant it; and when he failed under the strong temptation, he was true in heart still. Beginners in religion who fail and fall short, while the new ways and life are strange to them, are often met with a sneer, as if their hypocrisy were proved. But they do not profess to be perfect Christians, or to have attained at once a faultless state. They only profess to be trying with God's help to forsake sin, and to go in Christ's steps towards holiness. Those who wish to be quite true sometimes feel as if the words they use in praise or prayer sound unreal and what they dare hardly utter. But what we do and say often expresses the state and the feelings we long for, rather than those which we have fully made our own. A child can say the Lord's Prayer, and can have a true meaning in each petition; and as his mind opens to understand more of the deep, full meaning of the words, he is helped to reach after greater things when he prays.

All who wish to be true will watch and try themselves lest they seek and gain only a reward which does not come from God. What they would like to be thought by men will fix what they must try to be in the sight of God. They will do their best to act naturally, and to have nothing to hide. No one is bound to display his faults any more than his virtues. Praise which he does not deserve is a more keen reproof to an honest man than blame which he does deserve.

Hypocrisy is so low and dark a sin that none should be lightly charged with it. Those who have been misunderstood and wrongly judged, should fear lest they give others the pain which they have felt themselves. Those who try to read their own hearts, will remember how hard it must be to know the hearts of others. To God

we must all answer. If we fear lest we be hypocrites, He will make and keep us true.

OUR BETTERS.

THE Church Catechism explains the Ten Commandments so as to make them a clear guide in our everyday life. We are taught that part of our duty laid down in the Fifth Commandment is to "order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters." Have we any "betters?" If so, who are they? What is meant by ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to them? These questions are worth answering, if we wish to obey God's law as the Church explains it. The common saying that "one man is as good as another" is not true. No one believes it, or acts on it. Those who use it generally think themselves much better than their neighbours. St. Paul (Phil. ii. 3) writes: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves;" and again (Eph. v. 24), "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God;" St. Peter also (1 Pet. iv. 17) bids us to "honour all men." These verses seem to have been in the minds of those from whom we have this explanation of the Fifth Commandment; they throw light on the meaning of it.

Those who know themselves are lowly; those who know how little they can know of others will not lightly vaunt themselves, despising others. What each man is in God's sight must always, more or less, be a secret from other men. The charity which believeth and hopeth all things must think the best of all; while conscience shames those who think of what they might be and of how far they fall short. These words, as well as those which tell us to submit one to another in the fear of God, were meant, in the first place, to guide the conduct of members of Christ's Church with one another. But St. Peter's words, "honour all

men" go farther. In our treatment of men whom God has made, we are to fear Him who made them in His own image, and to show reverence for Him by acting courteously towards them. So we may take this rule to mean that each in his place in life must keep God in mind, and, as a part of religious duty, act towards all with modesty and respect, being ready to serve them, and careful not to hurt their feelings.

So far there seems to be a rule for everyone with everyone else. But the words have more special meaning. They tell us of part of our duty taught by the Fifth Commandment. Our "betters," in the first place, are our parents. And it is not their goodness or greatness that binds us to lowly reverence: it is the fact of the relation in which they stand to us. We know them as our parents, whose children God has willed that we should be, and in honouring whom we really show self-respect. So all with whom we have to do, who in any way take the place or act the part of parents, have a claim for honour. The authority of fathers and mothers is the pattern of all other rightful authority. We render due "honour" and "fear" to those who teach us, and those who rule over us in Church and State. We look up to the aged, owning the claim for respect which long experience of life gives. When we engage in any way to serve others we are bound to do our service "with good will, as unto the Lord, and not unto men," helping to keep the good order of the world by upholding in word and manner, as well as deed, the authority under which we are.

Over and above all this, there are high and low, higher and lower, among men. There are differences in education and culture. There are ranks in life which do, as a matter of fact, exist; which all men in a way acknowledge, and which Holy Scripture takes for granted. The fact is so plain that it angers those who do not like it, while they cannot deny it. Those whose cry is loudest against others who seem above them, can always be pointed to some whom they themselves will not own to be their equals. Some of the distinctions that are made are hard to define and

perhaps hard to defend; but yet the system, as a whole, helps to keep order among men.

To be lowly is not to grovel or to lose self-respect. To be reverent is not to fawn or flatter, or to show a slavish spirit. There is true dignity in a manner which is free from all that might offend those with whom we have to deal. No one exalts himself by vulgar self-assertion. No one lowers himself by treating others with respect. What we give freely is not the offering of a bond slave. If we wish to receive from those in higher place the honour which is the right of all men, our surest course is to deny them nothing of what may be their special claim. If we walk humbly with our God, whose providence places us where we are, God will bid us come up higher, as is best, and when it is best. Nay, He raises us in our nature, even now, while we obey His will. If we, from feelings of reverence to Him before whom we live, treat others with courtesy, He will honour us, acknowledging us as His own.

PAST OR FUTURE?

THE state of life in which we are is that to which it has pleased God to call us. We believe that He rules all things, and never lets go His hold on anyone whom He has made. We may have a low place through our own fault; but it is God's will that our sin or folly should thus find us out. We may, though sinful and careless, have much of this world's good; God has His own reasons for letting us seem for a while to prosper in an evil course. We may find an honest, true work fail through causes which are out of our control; God knows what good He keeps us for, and from what dangers He saves us. We may find blessing follow us in our path of duty; God, whom we thank, has called us to the good state which we have reached. We may have been born with much done

by those who have gone before us to make our life bright, or we may have begun life in hardship and with every difficulty in our way. The one truth to be sure of and to hold fast is that God, whose creatures and whose redeemed we are, does not overlook us, but follows each with a fatherly care.

Wherever we are, and whatever our state, what are we to do? The answer is short and plain—our duty—the duty that lies before us each day, each hour; to fill our place, and to use the gifts and opportunities which we have. But does this mean that we are to make up our minds to move no higher and to make no effort to change our state? The Church is accused of teaching men so. The words of the Catechism are wrongly quoted, as if it said that all are bound to do their duty in that state of life to which it *hath* pleased God to call them, and to stay where they are. The Catechism does not say this. In the explanation of the Tenth Commandment, the Church teaches that all are bound to "learn and labour truly to get their own living, and to do their duty in that state of life unto which it *shall* please God to call them." This is quite a different thing. The Church takes for granted the fact that God's providence rules and overrules all things, and that no one is where he is among his fellow-men, apart from the arrangement of God's will. She insists on each doing his duty, now, and where he is. But she speaks of the future as well as of the present. So far from telling men to make no effort to rise, she suggests all possibilities to honourable and true ambition; and she not only does this; she hints that rising in the world may be a duty, and that each is bound to do what he can to prepare for new and higher duties to which it may please God to call him. More than this, she points out the true way to rise. A child that wishes to gain the head place in a school can only do so by diligence from day to day. When he has done well the work of the first standard, he is fit for the second, and is moved up. He would be very childish and foolish if he sulked and refused to learn his letters, because the prizes of the first class were out of his reach. A man who wants

to be at the top of a ladder does not try to get there by making wild jumps, but by climbing steadily, making sure of his footing as he mounts each step. Nor does he impatiently try to reach the top rung by pulling the ladder to the ground. So it is by the thoughtful and conscientious doing of the duty to which it pleases God to call us as days go on, that we improve ourselves and our position. We gain higher place in the world by doing well in the lower; the practice of our duty where God has called us gives us fitness for whatever place it may please Him to call us to in the future.

And even though our lot on earth may be lowly to the end, yet our doing of duty is not in vain. This world we live in now is not all; when life here is done, this is not our end. What we are is the great matter; not where we are. A time shall be when we shall care for what we have become, not what we have gained in our passing days here. Doing our duty trains and strengthens us for that life where each has his right place, and all things look what they are—just and good. The life of the carpenter of Nazareth was not a lost or wasted life, though it seemed to end in a death of shame. That Human Nature was taught and perfected in the way of duty and obedience to the Divine will. Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him who humbled Himself. We can follow His steps. Though we may seem to fail here, we shall know that nothing has been in vain, and that God is true, when we hear the voice saying to us: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, be thou ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

READING.

"OF making many books there is no end." So it was written by one who lived long ago. What would he say to the books of our time, and to the smaller publi-

cations that pour in a ceaseless stream from the press! The time that most men can spend in reading is not much; and life is, at the longest, short. Those who wish to make the best use of their opportunities find it hard to know what to read, and how to read on a good plan. Nothing proves more plainly a man's value for time, and respect for his own mind, than his choice of books and his way of reading. Reading should have an aim; that may be pleasure or profit, or both. Just as we listen to the wise words of one who knows more than we do, or the cheery talk of a light-hearted friend, so we read that we may learn, or may be pleased. It is not safe to associate with those of whom we know nothing; so it is running a foolish risk to take up books by chance, and expose ourselves to the influence of the writer's mind, whatever it may be. While we read one book, we are not reading another. So, a bad one keeps us from a good one, an inferior one from a better, a useless one from one that could bring us help and do us good.

Some books are written to meet the coarse low taste of the shameless. Let the shameless have these to themselves. Those who have self-respect must refuse to join in partnership with these base writers in a conspiracy to destroy that self-respect and disgrace their natures. He that toucheth pitch defileth himself therewith; and a book may, even while it disgusts, leave a deep stain upon the mind and the memory, which no effort will quite wash out. We keep our bodies or our clothes from touching one whose person is unclean. With what shrinking care should we watch lest our minds be brought into contact with a mind that is corrupt!

Books are often full of sneers at all that religious men hold sacred. God and God's ways are held up to open scoff, or there is a tone of irreverence and of trifling with solemn things, which tends to weaken faith and fear of God. Painful at first, this grows less so by familiarity. Men soon lose firmness of faith, and a right feeling of the sacredness of holy things, if they allow themselves in their reading to associate with the profane. A right-minded

man will not hear a human friend ridiculed or dishonoured; he who keeps in mind what God is and has done for him, will put away, as worse than an insult to himself, whatever might seem to touch the honour due to his God.

The body needs variety of food, if it is to be well nourished and to gain full vigour. So with the mind. It has a variety of powers, which should be, as far as possible, evenly developed. One sort of reading supplies what is lacking in others, and helps to make them profitable. The books that seem to provide only enjoyment, if used in due moderation, have much to do with the profit we gain from those that are more purely useful. These again give a better relish for the lighter reading to which we turn at times. It is not what we put into our bodies that strengthens them, but what they take up and make part of themselves. So reading may only weaken the mind, if the mind is merely passive. Thoughts of others must be thought about, if they are even to be remembered; much more if they are to leave us on the way to grow wiser, and better able to think for ourselves.

Many people hardly ever read what they care to keep in mind beyond the day or hour. So the memory loses, by degrees, the power of holding things beyond that time. Weeks pass, and nothing is read but the gossip of the newspapers, to be put away like the paper as soon as it is done with, and, like it, forgotten. Could the time wasted in half hours of aimless newspaper reading be added up each month, the account would startle those who wish their lives to have any purpose in them. Could the weakening effect on the mind be registered, they would indeed take fright. And that loss of time must be measured with the gain that might be won by really useful reading. That weakening of the mind can only be rightly understood by thinking of the strength that might be added.

The temptations to careless reading are very great, but the choice of books is so great, and the inducements to read so as to profit are so great, that no one ought to dare to plead excuses for not doing his best. It is easy to get advice from those who know books and know us. It is

easy to nerve ourselves to a right feeling of our duty in this matter, by remembering our responsibility for self-improvement, and the influence of the books we read, and the way in which we read them, in fitting us for our work here, and our place for ever. We are bound, like Christ, to hear and to ask questions of those who can teach us truth and guide our lives. We are bound, like Him, to seek to increase in wisdom and maturity and in favour with God and man. Thoughtful reading of the right books is among the needful and the surest means to this end.

THE END.

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